

Information Governance Team

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Dear Sir/Madam.

**Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)
Request ID: REQ06392**

Thank you for your request for information relating to children returning from Syria.

You have requested the following information:

1. **Since 1.1.18 to the date of this e-mail how many children (under 18s) has your authority become aware of, and taken responsibility for, where the child has been a returning UK citizen from the conflict in Syria?**
2. **Can you provide me with a breakdown of the ages and sexes of these children?**
3. **How many of these children have returned to the UK without their:**
 - a. **Father?**
 - b. **Mother?**
 - c. **Both parents?**
4. **How many of these children are being provided with an education from a local authority mainstream school?**
5. **How many of these children have been taken into local authority care since they returned to the UK?**

In relation to the requested information in questions 1 to 5 we neither confirm or deny that Coventry City Council holds the information you requested. This information is exempt from disclosure under Section 31(1)(a) and Section 31(3) – Law Enforcement. Disclosure of this information would be likely to prejudice the prevention or detection of crime.

Section 31(1)(a) and Section 31(3) are qualified exemptions, and therefore is subject to the Public Interest Test. Section 31(1)(a) and Section 31(3) provides an exemption where prejudice could be caused to allow in confirming that the Council has returnees from Daesh held territory carries the danger of increased community tension. To use this exemption, we are required to undertake a public interest test. The matters which were considered in applying the public interest test are as follows:

Factors in favour of disclosure

- There is a general public interest in disclosure based around the fact that openness in government increases public trust in, and engagement with, the government.
- In relation to Syria returnees the public have a right to know how many of these possibly dangerous individuals are living in their area.

Factors in favour of withholding

- Releasing this information could increase the risk of offences against both Syria returnees and the wider public due to the controversial status of the former.
- The small number of returnees means those with local knowledge could use this information as an identifier of Syrian returnees.
- There is a significant possibility that they will use this knowledge to commit offences against returnees.
- Knowledge that Syria returnees live in an area may trigger an increase in offences e.g. hate crimes, due to wrongful identification.

Considerations around Neither Confirming nor Denying

- If a local authority states that they hold information on Syria returnees and are withholding it, they are de facto confirming that they have Daesh returnees.
- If a local authority states that it does not have any Syria returnees, individuals could use multiple FOI requests and the process of elimination to find out which areas held returnees.

It is considered that the greater public interest, therefore, lies in not providing the information at this time. In coming to that conclusion, the public interest in providing the information has been carefully weighed against any prejudice to the public interest that might arise from withholding the information; in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. This response, therefore, acts as a refusal notice under Section 17 of the FOIA.

Having considered the public interest, we have decided not to release the information.

For information, we publish a variety of information such as: [FOI/EIR Disclosure Log](#), [Publication Scheme](#), [Facts about Coventry](#) and [Open Data](#) that you may find of useful if you are looking for information in the future.

If you are unhappy with the handling of your request, you can ask us to review our response. Requests for reviews should be submitted within 40 days of the date of receipt of our response to your original request – email: infogov@coventry.gov.uk

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our review, you can write to the Information Commissioner, who can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or email casework@ico.org.uk.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in your response.

Yours sincerely

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