

Response to Request for Information

Reference FOI 001053
Date 11 April 2017

Food Bank Referrals

Request:

Please consider this request under the Freedom of Information Act.

Please can I have the total number of recorded food bank referrals made by all council staff for every year from 2007-2017? Your request for information has now been considered. Unfortunately City of Wolverhampton Council cannot supply all of the information you requested for the reasons set out below. Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires City of Wolverhampton Council, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you, the applicant with a notice which:

- (a) states the fact,
- (b) specifies the exemption in question and
- (c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies:

In relation to your particular request, the following exemption applies:

Section 12 - Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

We can confirm that the Council holds information falling within the description specified in your request. However, Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 allows a public authority to refuse a request if the cost of providing the information to the applicant would exceed the 'appropriate limit' as defined by the Freedom of Information.

The Regulations provide that the appropriate limit to be applied to requests received by local authorities is £450 (equivalent to 18 hours of work). In estimating the cost of complying with a request for information, an authority can only take into account any reasonable costs incurred in:

- (a) *Determining whether it holds the information,*
- (b) *Locating the information, or a document which may contain the information,*
- (c) *Retrieving the information, or a document which may contain the information,*
and
- (d) *Extracting the information from a document containing it.*

For the purposes of the estimate the costs of performing these activities should be estimated at a rate of £25 per hour.

The information appertaining to the total number of recorded food bank referrals made by all council staff for every year from 2007-2017 is not easily accessible and as such this information is not held as a distinct set able to be retrieved or reported on. To get the information would require a full scale look into all individual case records. This would be a manual exercise and as such we believe that the aggregated time it would take to collate the information would be in excess of 18 hours (equivalent to a notional cost of £450).

Please can I have the number of residents awarded welfare assistance or crisis payments to specifically assist with basic food costs? Please can I have a breakdown of this information for each year between 2008-2017? Information only available (and only in part) from April 2013 when Social Fund Crisis Loans ceased to be paid by the DWP and the Council became responsible for local welfare assistance.

Information available is as follows:

From April 2013 to 30 June 2014 Wolverhampton operated a Council-run Local Discretionary Grant Scheme. Food was an excluded item under the scheme but Crisis Loans for items such as food were made available through Credit Union funding of £62,550. Funding of £4,128 was also provided to secure 24 pallets of food for local foodbanks.

From 1 July 2014, a loan scheme was introduced by the Council in partnership with Wolverhampton Credit Union. Crisis Loans and Welfare Assistance Loans are available under this scheme. Crisis loans are available to Wolverhampton residents on a low income with an urgent need. Information about what the Crisis Loan payment is to be spent on is not required as part of the scheme. 1,036 Crisis Loans were issued by the Credit Union from 1 July 2014 to the end of 2016 amounting to £103,670.