



## Response to Request for Information

Reference      FOI 002906  
Date            26 October 2018

### ***Council Housing, Bedroom Tax and Rent Arrears***

I am requesting the following information under the Freedom of Information Act.

Please note that this request \*begins with question 5\*. There are no questions 1-4; I deleted them from a trial version of this request and, given how much cross-referencing exists between the later questions, I couldn't be bothered to renumber the rest of the request.

Some councils have ALMOs. I am sending questions 8-19 directly to ALMOs. If any other questions should be handled by the council's ALMO rather than the council itself, please forward those questions to the ALMO as well.

#### Bedroom tax

This section is heavily dependent on the data the council routinely records. Therefore, if the information for any question from 5-7 is not routinely recorded, please mark the question as 'information not held' and fulfil the remainder of this request.

5. How many households are currently subject to the Spare Room Subsidy ('bedroom tax')?

We have a total of 1748 Housing Benefit (HB) cases for Housing Revenue Account (HRA) properties subject to Social Sector Size Criteria (SSSC - 'bedroom tax or 'spare room subsidy).

6. Of the households that are currently subject to the Spare Room Subsidy ('bedroom tax'), how many include a current recipient of Employment Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit or the Personal Independence Payment?

1024 of these were in receipt of an Employment Support Allowance (ESA) award and 677 were in receipt of a Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

7. How many of the households referred to in response to question 6 are recipients of a disabled facilities grant for their current accommodation?

In respect of this question your request for information has now been considered and the City of Wolverhampton Council is not obliged to supply 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 the information falling within the description specified in your request. However, Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the Act") exempts a public authority from providing the information where the estimated cost of compliance with the request exceeds the appropriate limit. Any estimate must be made in accordance with the limits set in the Fees Regulations made under Section 12 (5) of the Act.

These Fees Regulations (SI2004/3244 Freedom of Information and Data Protection [Appropriate Limit and Fees] Regulation) allow for a refusal where the cost of compliance, for local authorities such as the Council would exceed £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 this element of your request 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 involve a review of all individual applications for a Disabled Facilities Grant (that are subject to an assessment from a Social Services Occupational Therapist) and cross-matched to those individuals who are in receipt of ESA and PIP current addresses. This would be a manual exercise as the information is held on separate systems and it is estimated that this would take in excess of 18 hours (equivalent to a notional cost of £450) to locate, retrieve, extract and collate the information.

Alternatively, if you can narrow down or perhaps re-focus this element of your request to bring it within the cost limit, the Council will re-consider it. Perhaps by

specifying a specific time-period e.g. for the current year how many approved Disabled Facilities Grant applications were awarded to people in receipt of either an ESA or PIP.

### Universal Credit rent arrears

If the council does not have its own council housing or ALMO housing stock, please ignore questions 8-19 and proceed straight to question 20 in the next section.

8. How many council housing tenant households are there overall?

21804 (occupied)

9. Of the households referred to in response to question 8, how many are currently in arrears on their rent by at least one month?

2001

10. Of the households referred to in response to question 8, how many are currently in arrears on their rent by at least two months?

745

PLEASE NOTE - THE FIGURE FOR QUESTION 9 SHOULD INCLUDE THE HOUSEHOLDS REFERRED TO IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION 10.

11. How many council housing tenant households currently receive Housing Benefit (not Universal Credit)?

10974

12. Of the households referred to in response to question 11, how many are currently in arrears on their rent by at least one month?

337

13. Of the households referred to in response to question 11, how many are currently in arrears on their rent by at least two months?

94

PLEASE NOTE - THE FIGURE FOR QUESTION 12 SHOULD INCLUDE THE HOUSEHOLDS REFERRED TO IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION 13.

14. How many council housing tenant households currently receive Universal Credit?

2619

15. Of the households referred to in response to question 14, how many are currently in arrears on their rent by at least one month?

543

16. Of the households referred to in response to question 15, how many are currently in arrears on their rent by at least two months?

430

PLEASE NOTE - THE FIGURE FOR QUESTION 15 SHOULD INCLUDE THE HOUSEHOLDS REFERRED TO IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION 16.

17. How many council housing tenant households currently receive Universal Credit, whose Universal Credit claim was opened after 1st April 2018?

I am advising that this information is not held by the City of Wolverhampton Council or Wolverhampton Homes, as this is not a category of data that we record.

Therefore, this request is exempt under Section 1 of the FOIA 2000 which states:

(1) Any person making a request for information to a public authority is entitled—

(a) to be informed in writing by the public authority whether it holds information of the description specified in the request, and

(b) if that is the case, to have that information communicated to him.

More information on Section 1 of the FOI Act can be found at <http://ICO.org.uk>

With regard to question 17, a claim was "opened" when it started; subsequent alterations to the claim (due to variations in monthly earnings, for example) are irrelevant. Regarding households that moved into the local authority area after 1st April 2018 but had (or may have had) a pre-existing Universal Credit claim already in operation - please categorise these at your discretion, based on what is administratively easiest.

18. Of the households referred to in response to question 17, how many are currently in arrears on their rent by at least one month?

See response to question 17.

19. Of the households referred to in response to question 17, how many are currently in arrears on their rent by at least two months?

See response to question 17.

PLEASE NOTE - THE FIGURE FOR QUESTION 18 SHOULD INCLUDE THE HOUSEHOLDS REFERRED TO IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION 19.

#### Social housing refusals

20. In 2017/18, how many households towards whom the council had accepted a main homeless duty had their nomination for housing as a homeless household refused by a social housing landlord (including the council itself)?

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]

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21. In 2017/18, how many of the households referred to in response to question 20 had their nomination for housing refused by a social housing landlord on grounds of affordability or limited entitlement to welfare assistance? Please break this figure down by each social landlord if possible.

[See response to question 20.](#)

To provide clarity on questions 20 and 21 - councils accept a main homeless duty to households. They then nominate those households to social housing landlords in order to house them. Social housing landlords can refuse. That refusal might be due to the household failing an assessment of whether they could afford the rent, and/or limited entitlement to welfare assistance (i.e. their benefits won't cover the rent). This is what questions 20 and 21 are about.

If the council does not record the reason for refusals, please exclude question 21 and fulfil the remainder of this request.

I would like responses via email using the attached spreadsheet. Please contact me if you require any clarifications.

This request concerns housing; therefore it should not be aggregated with any other request I have lodged with the council regarding matters aside from housing.