

FOI number: **HBC_FOI_20200458**
Date FOI Received: **14/08/2020**
Department: **Benefits**
Title: **Discretionary Housing Payments**
Description: **Discretionary Housing Payment Applicants**

Request: (As Redacted sent by requestor)

I wish to request information from your authority about the use of discretionary housing payments (DHPs) in the year 2019/20. In particular, I am interested in information on the number of applications for Discretionary housing Payments (DHPs) received by your local authority, the number of applications for DHPs refused and the lengths of time that DHP awards are made for.

Please find the full request for information below

For all of the following, we would like to request data for the year 2019/20. Please complete all of the fields possible.

A All applicants

DHP applications and awards

The total discretionary housing payment (DHP) budget available to your local authority for the 2019/20 year [please include, and specify, any additional top up funds granted].

The amount spent or committed on DHPs at the end of the year 2019/20

The number of applications for DHP received by your local authority in the year 2019/20

The number of applications refused.

Length of time of award

The average length of time a DHP was given for in 2019/20

The number of DHPs given for the different time periods listed

- a. Less than 4 weeks (including one-off payments)
- b. 4 weeks to 12 weeks
- c. Between 12 weeks and 26 weeks
- d. Between 26 weeks and 52 weeks
- e. More than 52 weeks

Repeat applicants (if recorded)

The number of applications received where the applicant had previously received a DHP from your authority

The number of applications refused where the applicant had previously received a DHP from your authority

B Applicants affected by low local housing allowance levels

The Local Authority monitoring returns on DHP asks local authorities to categorise DHP spend according to which welfare reforms the DHP was awarded. For the following questions, we are interested in DHP applications and awards made by people affected by Local Housing Allowance (LHA) reforms

DHP applications and awards

The number of applications received where the reason the applicant was in need of support was that they were impacted by low LHA levels

The number of these applications refused

The average length of time a DHP award was given for in 2019/20, for households affected by low LHA levels

The number of awards made for households affected by low LHA levels for the following reasons

- To help with on-going rental costs for disabled person in adapted accommodation
- To help with on-going rental costs for a foster carer
- To help with on-going rental costs for any other reason

The average length of time these DHPs were given for

The number of these DHPs given for the different time periods listed

- a. Less than 4 weeks (including one-off payments)
- b. 4 weeks to 12 weeks
- c. Between 12 weeks and 26 weeks
- d. Between 26 weeks and 52 weeks
- e. More than 52 weeks

C Applicants affected by the household benefit cap

DHP applications and awards

The number of applications received where the reason the applicant was in need of support was that they were impacted by the household benefit cap

The number of these applications refused

The average length of time a DHP award was given for in 2019/20, for households affected by the benefit cap

The number of awards made for households affected by the benefit cap for the following reasons

- To help with on-going rental costs for disabled person in adapted accommodation
- To help with on-going rental costs for a foster carer
- To help with on-going rental costs for any other reason

The average length of time these DHPs were given for

The number of these DHPs given for the different time periods listed

- a. Less than 4 weeks (including one-off payments)
- b. 4 weeks to 12 weeks
- c. Between 12 weeks and 26 weeks
- d. Between 26 weeks and 52 weeks
- e. More than 52 weeks

D Discretionary Housing Payment's allocation policy

Your most recent Discretionary Housing Payments policy document, setting out the procedures in place for determining DHP awards

Exemptions:

Section 12:

I understand that one exemption that may apply to this request is that described at Section 12(1) - 12(4) of the Freedom of Information Act, where "the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit". If the council does refuse the request by relying on Section 12, I would respectfully ask that it comply with the Information Commissioner's advice and confirm whether or not the information is held by the Council.

Section 16:

Further, I am available to help and assist the Council, and would be happy to refine the request, in order to reduce the time needed to provide the information requested. I would respectfully ask that the Council consider its duty "to provide advice and assistance" as set out at Section 16 of the Act. The Information Commissioner states in advice that the "a public authority should consider in these circumstances...how it can provide advice and assistance to help an applicant narrow, reform or refocus their request..."

Section 21:

If this information described in this request is already publicly available and therefore exempt under Section 21 of the Act, I respectfully request that the Council inform me to where it can be found.

Public Interest:

I do not believe that any of the Freedom of Information Act exemptions should apply to the information requested. However, in the case that the Council argues otherwise I now present some arguments as to why it would be in the public interest - and indeed in the interests of the council and the people it serves - to release the information I have requested.

1. There is a bias toward disclosure in the Freedom of Information Act itself, as there is a general public interest in transparency in public affairs and in how money raised through taxation is managed and spent.
2. There is a clear public interest in the efficient administration of public money and resources.
3. There is a legitimate aim in greater transparency in the inner workings and process of the management of assistance for households threatened with homelessness
4. The publication of the information requested serves the interest of households threatened with homelessness themselves in achieving greater transparency and comfort in the workings of their own housing situation.
5. Publication will enable charities to target resources at areas where people are in need
6. Shelter are requesting this information to develop a clear understanding of how we can help reduce the costs falling to local and national government. The charity will use the data understand where they can help service users further. Therefore, publication of the information requested will have a direct benefit for local authorities and the taxpayer.

Response: (Response as Redacted sent by service)

DHP applications and awards

The total discretionary housing payment (DHP) budget available to your local authority for the 2019/20 year [please include, and specify, any additional top up funds granted]. £262,410

The amount spent or committed on DHPs at the end of the year 2019/20 £262,441.73

The number of applications for DHP received by your local authority in the year 2019/20 304

The number of applications refused. 105

Length of time of award

The average length of time a DHP was given for in 2019/20 223 days

The number of DHPs given for the different time periods listed

- a. Less than 4 weeks (including one-off payments) 16
- b. 4 weeks to 12 weeks 18
- c. Between 12 weeks and 26 weeks 52
- d. Between 26 weeks and 52 weeks 106
- e. More than 52 weeks

Repeat applicants (if recorded)

The number of applications received where the applicant had previously received a DHP from your authority Do not record this data

The number of applications refused where the applicant had previously received a DHP from your authority Do not record this data

B Applicants affected by low local housing allowance levels

The Local Authority monitoring returns on DHP asks local authorities to categorise DHP spend according to which welfare reforms the DHP was awarded. For the following questions, we are interested in DHP applications and awards made by people affected by Local Housing Allowance (LHA) reforms

DHP applications and awards

The number of applications received where the reason the applicant was in need of support was that they were impacted by low LHA levels Not held – we do not record this for refused DHPs

The number of these applications refused as above

The average length of time a DHP award was given for in 2019/20, for households affected by low LHA levels Not recorded – the report specifying the length of DHP does show the reason for the DHP

The number of awards made for households affected by low LHA levels for the following reasons

- To help with on-going rental costs for disabled person in adapted accommodation

2

- To help with on-going rental costs for a foster carer 0
- To help with on-going rental costs for any other reason 43

The average length of time these DHPs were given for

The number of these DHPs given for the different time periods listed

- a. Less than 4 weeks (including one-off payments)
- b. 4 weeks to 12 weeks
- c. Between 12 weeks and 26 weeks
- d. Between 26 weeks and 52 weeks
- e. More than 52 weeks

As above

C Applicants affected by the household benefit cap

DHP applications and awards

The number of applications received where the reason the applicant was in need of support was that they were impacted by the household benefit cap [Not held – we do not record this for refused DHPs](#)

The number of these applications refused – [As above](#)

The average length of time a DHP award was given for in 2019/20, for households affected by the benefit cap - [Not recorded – the report specifying the length of DHP does show the reason for the DHP](#)

The number of awards made for households affected by the benefit cap for the following reasons

- To help with on-going rental costs for disabled person in adapted accommodation 0
- To help with on-going rental costs for a foster carer 0
- To help with on-going rental costs for any other reason 21

The average length of time these DHPs were given for

The number of these DHPs given for the different time periods listed

- a. Less than 4 weeks (including one-off payments)
- b. 4 weeks to 12 weeks
- c. Between 12 weeks and 26 weeks
- d. Between 26 weeks and 52 weeks
- e. More than 52 weeks

[As above](#)

D Discretionary Housing Payment's allocation policy

Your most recent Discretionary Housing Payments policy document, setting out the procedures in place for determining DHP awards

[Please see the following link:](#)

<https://www5.hertsmere.gov.uk/democracy/documents/s29907/C.13.34%20Appendix.pdf>

If you have any queries about the processing of your request then please do not hesitate to contact me. Further information explaining the Council's process for responding to information requests together with a complaints/appeals procedure is available in our reception or via our website at:

<https://www.hertsmere.gov.uk/Your-Council/Official-Publications--Guides--Policies/Access-to-Information.aspx>

The Information Commissioner oversees the application of the Freedom of Information Act. You may contact the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioners Office
Wycliffe House, Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF
Telephone: 01625 545700
Website: www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk