



Assurance Group
London Borough of Barnet,
2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale,
London NW9 4EW
15 September 2020
Our ref: 6528600

Thank you for your request received on 24 August 2020, for the following information:

I am writing to request some information on furniture provision through any form of Local Welfare Provision/Assistance or local crisis fund that you may provide. The questions are attached and pasted below this email.

What was the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme budget in your local authority for each of the financial years ' 2018/19; 2019/20; and 2020/21?

How much was spent during 2018/19; 2019/20; and 2020/21? For 2020/21, how much has been spent so far?

What type of support is available, for example cash loans, grants, and/or furniture and white goods?

Do you provide furniture/white goods through your Local Welfare Assistance Scheme?

If you do provide support for furniture/white goods through your Local Welfare Assistance Scheme, do you supply the item or a grant/cash to purchase items?

If you provide furniture/white goods through your Local Welfare Assistance scheme, what proportion of your budget is spent on these items?

Have you received any additional Government funding specifically for a Local Welfare Assistance Scheme in 2020? If yes, how much?

What were the number of completed applications to the scheme in 2018/19; 2019/20; and 2020/21?

How many were successful in 2018/19; 2019/20; and 2020/21?

We have processed this request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Response

The council holds the information requested and it is attached/ the answers to your questions are below

I am writing to request some information on furniture provision through any form of Local Welfare Provision/Assistance or local crisis fund that you may provide.

This information relates to the Mayor's Benevolent Fund, a registered charity, which supports borough residents in receipt of an income-related benefit through the award

of grants of up to £200 to buy household goods; furniture; carpets, curtains and other soft furnishings; secondary school uniform; baby items; clothing for adults (in certain defined circumstances); and unforeseen debts. Grants are paid either in the form of an Argos gift card or a cheque in favour of a specific retailer.

A copy of the publicity on the fund on the website is attached.

The fund used to operate on the basis of funding awards purely from income accruing on investments, but has been heavily reliant on an annual subsidy from other sources for most of the last ten years during which time interest rates have been very low, compromising the ability to make awards drawing on investment income only. The budget for making awards varies annually, having ranged from £10k to £18k in recent years depending on the level of subsidy.

In 2018/19, there were 65 applications (*) seeking help to buy household goods which resulted in 62 awards valued at £10,780 (from a total of 90 awards valued at £12,900).

In 2019/20, there were 95 applications (*) for the same purpose which resulted in 78 awards valued at £13,850 (from a total of 122 awards valued at £17,725).

In 2020/21, there have been 72 applications (*) to date for the same purpose which have so far resulted in 29 awards valued at £5,215 (from a total of 79 awards to date valued at £10,405).

(* The number of applications shown excludes those that were invalid because they failed to satisfy the eligibility criteria and those that were subsequently withdrawn, usually because funding had been obtained elsewhere. The figure for 2019/20 reflects the fact that an unusually large number of applications were received too late for a decision and were carried forward for consideration in 2020/21).

Further information

If you are interested in the data that the council holds you may wish to visit Open Barnet, the council's data portal. This brings together all our published datasets and other information of interest on one searchable database for anyone, anywhere to access. <http://open.barnet.gov.uk/>

Advice and Assistance : Direct Marketing

If you are a company that intends to use the names and contact details of council officers (or other officers) provided in this response for direct marketing, you need to be registered with the Information Commissioner to process personal data for this purpose. You must also check that the individual (whom you wish to contact for direct marketing purposes) is not registered with one of the Preference Services to prevent Direct Marketing. If they are you must adhere to this preference.

You must also ensure you comply with the Privacy Electronic and Communications Regulations (PECR). For more information follow this Link www.ico.org.uk

For the avoidance of doubt the provision of council (and other) officer names and contact details under FOI does not give consent to receive direct marketing via any media and expressly does not constitute a 'soft opt-in' under PECR.

Your rights

If you are unhappy with the way your request for information has been handled, you can request a review within the next 40 working days by writing to the Information Management Team at: foi@barnet.gov.uk. Or by post to Information Management Team (FOI) London Borough of Barnet, 2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, NW9 4EW

If, having exhausted our review procedure, you remain dissatisfied with the handling of your request or complaint, you will have a right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF (telephone: 0303 123 1113; website www.ico.org.uk). There is no charge for making an appeal.