

14 October 2021
Our ref: 7660860

Thank you for your request received on 20 September 2021, for the following information:

I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information from this council. Please may you provide me with:

The total number of people who are (knowingly to the council) overpaying on their council tax and the total monetary figure of these unclaimed amounts between January 2016 and January 2021.

Please provide the information in the form of a spreadsheet or simple table categorised by the reason for overpayment - split by year between January 2016 and January 2021 and the total number of people plus the total monetary figure per category. The categorisations for the reasons for overpayment are listed:

- * Overpayment due to Exemptions/Discounts**
- * Overpayment due to Band Changes**
- * Overpayment due to Leaving the Borough**
- * Overpayment due to Other Reasons**

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

Response

I can confirm that the council holds the information you requested. However we are withholding some of the information because we consider that the following exemption exemptions and exceptions apply to it.

S12 - Cost limit (Exceeds Appropriate Limit)

We are refusing your request under section 12 because we estimate that compliance with your request will exceed the "appropriate limit" under section 12. The appropriate limit is £450 which is equivalent to 18 hours at £25 per hour. The per hour figure is set by Regulation rather than actual salary paid to any officers handling requests. The appropriate limit includes the time it will take the council to discover if it holds the information requested, to locate it, extract it and collate it as well as putting it into any particular format requested by the requester.

Due to restrictions in our reporting system, we would have to check each Council Tax account that has been overpaid to establish the reason.

We have calculated that it will take approx. 1000 plus hours to comply with your request.

Our calculation is as follows:

There are 40,000 plus accounts with overpayments and we would have to check each of these accounts and estimate it would take 2 minutes per account which totals 1000 plus hours.

Reasons for the overpayment could be due to:

Council Tax Support awarded
Vacated the property
Band reductions
Exemption/Discount awarded
Council Tax payer passed away

The Council Tax departments policy is to refund any overpayment via BACS, providing bank details are held on the Council Tax account.

If there are no bank details held a credit demand notice would be issued to the last known or forwarding address advising of the credit.

Once a response is received a refund is issued to the Council Tax payer via the bank details provided.

Period	Total Balance	Number of Accounts
01.01.2016 - 31.03.2016	-£231,778.16	1,796
01.04.2016 - 31.03.2017	-£750,084.78	5,785
01.04.2017 - 31.03.2018	-£782,022.58	5,936
01.04.2018 - 31.03.2019	-£864,004.88	6,235
01.04.2019 - 31.03.2020	-£1,116,130.98	8,798
01.04.2020 - 31.01.2021	-£2,058,358.57	14,115
Grand Total	-£5,802,379.95	42,665

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 Records & Information Management Service, Assurance Group, 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.