

London Borough of Barnet
2 Bristol Avenue,
Colindale NW9 4EW
19 May 2022
Our ref: 8238796

Thank you for your request received on 20 April 2022, for the following information:

Dear Madam/Sir,

I am writing to politely request the following information under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA):

How many unpaid council tax reminders have been sent out for the last 5 financial years for which data is available?

- a) Number of reminders sent overall, broken down by year**
- b) Number of households sent reminders, broken down by year**

How many a) court summons b) liability orders did the council issue for unpaid council tax for the last 5 financial years for which data is available?

- 1) Number issued overall, broken down by year**
- 2) Number of households issued, broken down by year**
- 3) Number of reminders issued, broken down by year**

For the last 5 financial years for which data is available

- 1) How many households are in council tax arrears, broken down by year**
- 2) How much is owed overall in council tax arrears, broken down by year**

How many a) overall b) households have applied for a special repayment plan to pay council tax for the last 5 financial years for which data is available, broken down by year?

How many a) overall b) households have the council agreed a special repayment plan with to pay council tax arrears for the last 5 financial years for which data is available, broken down by year?

How many a) overall b) households have asked for help from the council regarding council tax arrears repayment for the last 5 financial years for which data is available, broken down by year?

For the last 5 financial years for which data is available

- a) How many households have the council taken 'enforcement action' against to collect unpaid council tax, please breakdown by type of enforcement action, broken down by year?**
- b) How many 'enforcement actions' have been used by the council, to collect unpaid council tax, overall, please breakdown by type of enforcement action, broken down by year?**

For the last 5 financial years for which data is available?

a) How many referrals have the council made to bailiffs in order to collect unpaid council tax, broken down by year?

b) How many households have the council referred to bailiffs over unpaid council tax, broken down by year?

I would be grateful if you could provide this information in an electronic format.

If it is not possible to provide the information requested due to the information exceeding the cost of compliance limits identified in Section 12, please provide advice and assistance, under the Section 16 obligations of the Act, as to how I can refine my request.

If you can identify any ways that my request could be refined I would be grateful for any further advice and assistance.

If you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact me via email and I will be very happy to clarify what I am asking for and discuss the request.

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 applies.

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.

We have calculated 82,249 Council tax accounts that have had enforcement action would need to be checked and it will take approx. 3 minutes per account and a total of 2,741 hours to extract the information requested in order to comply with your request.

How many unpaid council tax reminders have been sent out for the last 5 financial years for which data is available?

Number of reminders sent overall, broken down by year

2017-18 – 75,579

2018-19 – 78,765

2019-20 – 73,472

2020-21 – 78,104

2021-22 – 99,067

Number of households sent reminders, broken down by year

As above

How many a) court summons b) liability orders did the council issue for unpaid council tax for the last 5 financial years for which data is available?

Number issued overall, broken down by year

2017-18 – (a) 23,715 (b) 19,002

2018-19 – (a) 23,160 (b) 19,442

2019-20 – (a) 23,545 (b) 18,963

2020-21 – (a) 10,334 (b) 9,150

2021-22 – (a) 18,780 (b) 15,692

Number of households issued, broken down by year

As above

3) Number of reminders issued, broken down by year

See question 1

For the last 5 financial years for which data is available

How many households are in council tax arrears, broken down by year

2017-18 – 15,348

2018-19 – 16,373

2019-20 – 18,398

2020-21 – 20,719

2021-22 – 31,016

How much is owed overall in council tax arrears, broken down by year

2017-18 – £5.1m

2018-19 – £5.8m

2019-20 – £7.6m

2020-21 – £9.6m

2021-22 – £15.8m

How many

a) overall

b) households have applied for a special repayment plan to pay council tax for the last 5 financial years for which data is available, broken down by year?

Not Held

How many

a) overall

b) households have the council agreed a special repayment plan with to pay council tax arrears for the last 5 financial years for which data is available, broken down by year?

Due to restrictions in our reporting system, this information is not readily available and would be a manual process. See exemption explanation.

How many

a) overall

b) households have asked for help from the council regarding council tax arrears repayment for the last 5 financial years for which data is available, broken down by year?

Not Held

For the last 5 financial years for which data is available

a) How many households have the council taken 'enforcement action' against to collect unpaid council tax, please breakdown by type of enforcement action, broken down by year?

Financial Year

2017-18

14 Day Notice	717
Attachment of Benefits	173
Attachment of Earnings	45
Charging Order	17
Committal	1
Pre-Enforcement Agents	260
Pre-Committal	110

Financial Year

2018-19

14 Day Notice	807
Attachment of Benefits	253
Attachment of Earnings	59
Charging Order	11
Pre-Enforcement Agents	257
Pre-Committal	58

**Financial Year
2019-20**

14 Day Notice	845
Attachment of Benefits	204
Attachment of Earnings	47
Charging Order	10
Pre-Enforcement Agents	169
Pre-Committal	22

**Financial Year
2020-21**

14 Day Notice	1168
Attachment of Benefits	58
Attachment of Earnings	3
Charging Order	4
Pre-Enforcement Agents	60

**Financial Year
2021-22**

14 Day Notice	1518
Attachment of Benefits	44
Attachment of Earnings	1
Pre-Enforcement Agents	18

b) How many 'enforcement actions' have been used by the council, to collect unpaid council tax, overall, please breakdown by type of enforcement action, broken down by year?

As above

For the last 5 financial years for which data is available?

a) How many referrals have the council made to bailiffs in order to collect unpaid council tax, broken down by year?

2017-18 – 4,158

2018-19 – 4,098

2019-20 – 3,551

2020-21 – 5,349

2021-22 – 5,535

b) How many households have the council referred to bailiffs over unpaid council tax, broken down by year?

As above

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.