



My Ref: FOI5196
Enquiries to: Information Requests
E-Mail: informationrequests@barnsley.gov.uk

Dear Requester,

Re: Request for Information – Freedom of Information Act 2000

I wish to confirm that the council has completed its search for the information which you requested.

The information requested and our findings are as follows: -

Request for Information: Special Educational Needs & Disability – High Needs Provision Capital Allocation, 2025-26

I would like to request the following information, which will be held by your finance and special educational needs and disability (SEND) teams:

High Needs Provision Capital Allocation

In March 2025, the Department for Education announced the allocation of High Needs Provision Capital Allocation (HNPCA) grants to local authorities for the 2025-26 financial year.

As part of the assurance arrangements for this grant, the Department for Education requested that each local authority:

“...to complete and return a grant assurance data return at an appropriate interval, to provide details on the projects they intend to fund using their HNPCA. An updated template will be sent to Directors of Children’s Services over the summer.”

(source – https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67e2d2025698d84e39cfdafb/HNPCA_2025-26_Grant_Spend_Guidance.pdf)

The Department for Education requested a completed HNPCA template form from each local authority. They requested an original template form to be returned to the DfE by 1st October 2025.

Please provide me with copies of the completed assurance data return template files that your council sent to the Department for Education under the conditions of the 2025-26 HNPCA grant. If possible, please provide a copy of the completed Excel template file (.xlsx) rather than a pdf file.

Please also redact any commercial sensitive data.

Please let me know if you need any further information to complete this FOI request.

After considering your request and in consultation with the council's Monitoring Officer they have deemed in their role as the Qualified Person as defined in the FOI Act that Section 36(2)(b)(ii) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 applies to your request.

Free and frank provision of advice or exchange of views

Section 36(2)(b) states:

36.—(2) Information to which this section applies is exempt information if in the reasonable opinion of a qualified person disclosure of the information under this Act—
(b) would, or would be likely to, inhibit—
(i) the free and frank provision of advice, or
(ii) the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation

The document requested does contain some information that is already publicly available as it has been discussed and minuted following Cabinet meetings, however the document also contains 'plans' which are not confirmed, not subject to decision and still being considered/deliberated.

Disclosing this information at this juncture could result in unnecessary pressure/influence or concerns especially given the topical issue of SEND nationally and locally.

It is essential that the council is able to have internal considerations on these matters without external influences until it reaches the point of formal consultation, at which time the public can have their say on such matters.

Redaction is an option but that would effectively render the document futile as it would be incomplete and make little sense.

In considering the points above it is the opinion of the qualified person that the exemption is applicable and that the public interest in maintaining it overrides that of disclosure. It is noted that some information is in the public domain and as such those aspects of the document are not considered as part of the Public Interest Test – it is the matters regarding external influence that maintain the application of the exemption.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact Information Requests Via email.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are unhappy with the way the Directorate has handled your request, you may ask for an internal review. Please clearly mark your correspondence 'Complaint' and address it to:

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PO Box 634, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 9GG

Barnsley MBC
Information Requests Team
PO Box 634
Barnsley
S70 9GG
email: informationrequests@barnsley.gov.uk

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: -

Customer Services Team
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Email: <http://www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints>

Kind regards,

Information Requests Team, Barnsley MBC

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