



My Ref: FOI5595
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: -

There is very limited, if any, publicly available information on the following issues. Answers to the following questions would provide the public with information about the extent of the support and/or forbearance afforded to victims of domestic abuse (including economic abuse) by local authorities across the UK as well as inform SEA's ongoing policy work and public campaign on this issue. The disclosure of such information would therefore undoubtedly be in the public interest.

1. Council tax arrears

- (a) What is the total value (£) of council tax arrears currently held by the authority? £13,430,292**
(b) How many individual accounts are currently in council tax arrears? 24,973
(c) How many council tax accounts were referred to enforcement agents (e.g. bailiffs) in the last 24 months? 13,751

2. Support to Victim-Survivors of Domestic Abuse

- (a) In the last 24 months, how many residents experiencing domestic abuse has the council supported with debt-related relief or support (e.g. council tax reductions, payment plans, discretionary hardship payments, write-offs)?** This data is not recorded.
(b) Does the authority record or monitor whether a resident requesting debt relief has experienced domestic abuse? If so, how many such cases have been recorded in the last 24 months? This data is not recorded.

3. Debt Recovery and Domestic Abuse Policies

- (a) Does the authority have any policies, procedures, or guidance documents that refer to domestic abuse as a consideration in debt recovery processes (including enforcement, recovery pauses, or alternative arrangements)? Please provide a copy or link.** The council has internal vulnerability guidance used within the debt recovery team. The guidance recognises domestic abuse as one of the potential risk factors. However, the council does not hold a separate, stand-alone debt recovery policy document this is specific to domestic abuse alone.
(b) Does the authority have any policies, procedures, or guidance that include domestic abuse as a factor in determining eligibility for council tax write-offs or reductions under Section 13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992? The Council Tax Discretionary Relief policy (Section 13A/CTDR) sets out eligibility and

decision criteria based on financial hardship and exceptional circumstances; it does not explicitly list domestic abuse as a discrete eligibility criterion within the policy. Separately, the Council's vulnerability guidance recognises domestic abuse as a potential vulnerability factor that may be relevant when considering a customer's circumstances and support needs.

4. Discretionary Write-Off Monitoring

(a) Does the authority monitor or record the use of discretionary council tax write-offs granted under Section 13A(1)(c)? The Council administers Council Tax Discretionary Relief (CTDR) under Section 13A and has a policy and decision framework. All awards are recorded. The Council does not record domestic abuse as a specific "reason" field for CTDR in a way that would allow reporting of the number of cases where domestic abuse was a contributing factor.

(b) If yes: How many discretionary council tax write-off requests were (i) received and (ii) approved and (iii) not approved in the last 24 months?

In 2025/26 147 applications were received and 1 award was made.

In 2024/25 140 applications were received and 4 awards were made.

(c) In how many of those (i) received (ii) approved and (iii) not approved cases was domestic abuse recorded as a contributing factor or reason for the request?

The Council does not record domestic abuse as a specific "reason" field for CTDR in a way that would allow reporting of the number of cases where domestic abuse was a contributing factor.

(d) Does the authority monitor and record the decision maker and decision-making time scale for council tax write offs? If yes: (i) Who was the decision maker for these cases and (ii) what was the average time taken to make a decision and (iii) were individuals given a written explanation when a request is refused?

The CTDR policy sets out decision roles and the approach to notification:

Decisions are made by a Finance Officer, and a notification is issued to all applicants

The policy states the Council will normally inform the customer in writing/electronically of the outcome within 28 days of receipt of all required information. The average time taken to input in 2025/26 was 26 day

5. Approaches to Other Public Sector Debts

(a) Does the authority have policies or guidance in place relating to recovery of other public sector debts (e.g. housing arrears, benefit overpayments, social care charges)? Yes. The Council holds corporate-level debt policy covering multiple debt streams (including Council Tax, Business Rates, periodic/sundry debts and Adult Social Care) and supporting debt procedures.

(b) Do any of these policies explicitly reference domestic abuse as a relevant factor in debt recovery or relief decisions? As previously stated domestic abuse is listed in the vulnerability guidance as one of the risk factors.

(c) Please provide copies or links to these policies. This Corporate Debt Policy is for internal use only and contains some commercially sensitive information. However, full details of our recovery processes for each type of debt we collect can be found on our

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website. <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/council-tax/if-you-dont-pay-your-council-tax/>

6. Enforcement Agents

(a) Are external enforcement agents used for council tax recovery? If yes, please provide the name(s) of current suppliers. Yes. The Council uses external enforcement agents.

The suppliers are:

Jacobs

Newlyn

CDER

Dukes

(b) Did your procurement or process for selection of external enforcement agents consider vulnerability in relation to domestic abuse? The procurement process considered vulnerability but nothing specific to domestic abuse

(c) Do your contracts with these suppliers set out requirements on vulnerability in relation to domestic abuse? There is nothing specific to domestic abuse.

(d) Do you share vulnerability relating to domestic abuse with enforcement agents, and if so under what policy or data sharing agreement? Please provide copy of the applicable data sharing agreement, if available. Where vulnerability information is shared with third parties, the vulnerability guidance framework requires explicit consent and an explanation of how the information will be used and who it may be shared with.

7. Training and practice

(a) Are your staff required to undertake training that include identifying signs of domestic abuse? For the debt recovery team specifically, no mandatory training is taken that is specific to domestic abuse, although vulnerability training is undertaken periodically.

Separate domestic abuse training is available to Council staff, this training has been created in association with IDAS (independent Domestic Abuse Service) and is recommended for all Council staff.

(b) Are your staff required to undertake training that includes identifying signs of economic abuse?

The domestic abuse training would also include identifying signs of economic abuse

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.

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PO Box 634, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 9GG

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:

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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