



My Ref: FOI/6205
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: -

1. In the last five financial years, how many Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) were issued by the Council split by primary and secondary pupils? Of those how many where provision is made in mainstream schools, special schools or independent providers? Data is recorded by calendar year and can be found in published data via the link below. This data provides a breakdown by age and by setting type.

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans/2026>

2. In the last five financial years what was the council budget for high needs special educational and actual outturn spend? What is the cumulative deficit on the special needs budget and what is the plan to repay this back to HM Treasury/Department for Education?

Financial Year	High Needs Block Allocation £'000	Actual High Needs Block spend £'000	* Actual surplus (-)/deficit (+) £'000
2021/22	23,370	31,060	6,189
2022/23	28,367	34,369	3,859
2023/24	32,261	37,459	3,308
2024/25	34,127	40,761	3,493
2025/26	37,638	48,662	8,109

**** Final closing position including other DSG surplus balances and excluding any safety valve payments.***

3. In the last five financial years, how many SEND Tribunal appeals were received against the council, and how many were upheld, split by primary and secondary pupils? We do not record data by financial year. Please see data below for the academic year. You can also access the data by calendar year using the link in question 1.

2020/21 – 34
2021/22 – 44
2022/23 – 40
2023/24 – 55
2024/25 – 97

We do not record the data for the phase of the tribunal.

Whilst we do record the outcome, data is not recorded prior to June 2024. For 2024/25 there are 5 tribunals recorded as having an outcome in favour of parent/carer. However, the majority of tribunals are resolved via Consent Order.

4. In the last two financial years, how many properties received a disabled person's council tax banding reduction from the council? Does the council share data with Social Services, Building Control or other departments, agencies where permitted, to identify eligible households who may qualify for a banding reduction?

- 2024/25: 500 properties
- 2025/26: 505 properties

5. Council debt by term over last three financial years

For each of the last three financial years, what was the Council's total outstanding principal debt (excluding leases and PFI if any), broken down by:

- Short term: less than 1 year
- Medium term: 2–5 years
- Long term: more than 5 years?

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	£000M	£000M	£000M
Loans Outstanding			
Short term: less than 1 year	12,091	5,149	19,462
12 - 24 months:	5,149	7,464	7,464
Medium term: 2-5 years	22,518	26,509	20,509
Long term: more than 5 years	538,314	526,860	525,431
	578,072	565,981	572,865

Loans Outstanding Fixed/Variable %	%	%	%
Fixed Interest Rate	100	100	98
Variable Interest Rate	-	-	2
	100	100	100

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	£000M	£000M	£000M
Interest Payable	20,383	18,894	18,477

Total loans outstanding does not represent the Council's overall level of debt, this is the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) which stands at £827M as at 31.03.26 (excluding PFI's).

The Council's strategy for managing interest rate risk is to set an upper limit on variable interest rate exposure, currently 30%, which is measured against the Council's **overall borrowing requirement**.

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6. Interest costs on debt

For each of the last three financial years, how much did the Council spend on debt interest to service the above debt? What proportion of this if any is funded by Council Tax? What proportion of this debt is at fixed interest rates and how does the council hedge itself against interest rate movements if any?

See above

7. Use of AI to improve efficiency and reduce costs

What assessment has the Council made of emerging artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to:

- Improve operational efficiencies**
- Reduce staffing requirements where appropriate**
- Help address current and future planned budget deficits?**

The Council is making use of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies with the aim of improving operational efficiency and supporting service delivery. The use of AI may assist service areas in planning staffing and budget requirements, alongside other available information and business processes.

The Council continues to monitor developments in AI and assess opportunities where the technology may help improve efficiency, reduce waste, and support the delivery of services within available resources.

8. Finance staffing and professional qualifications

As at the most recent available headcount date:

- How many staff are employed in finance-designated roles within the Council?**

There are currently 183 members of staff within financial services

- Of these, how many hold a full CCAB (or equivalent) professional accountancy qualification?

14 members of staff are CCAB or equivalent professionally qualified with 2 further members of staff about to become qualified.

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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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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