

LIFE OPPORTUNITIES – 13/27

REQUEST

I am requesting the following information under the Freedom of Information Act. Throughout this request, 'council housing' specifically includes housing owned by ALMOs or other council-owned property ownership/management subsidiaries.

All councils should respond to questions 1 and 2. Councils that no longer have any council housing stock (as defined above) should only respond to questions 1 and 2. Councils that do still have council housing stock should respond to all seven questions.

1. Could the council consider a tenant's eviction due to arrears where s/he is affected by the bedroom tax (be it council housing or a registered social landlord) to be evidence that the tenant made him/herself intentionally homeless?
2. Please provide any information the council has either collected independently or received from registered social landlords since 1st April 2013 regarding the impact of the bedroom tax on rent arrears among tenants of any registered social landlord(s). Any such information, if sent by RSLs, would probably have been sent to the council's Revenue and Benefits department, or to the council's Housing department. This excludes information pertaining to or identifying individual tenants/households.
3. Please state the most recent confirmed number of households in council housing in the local authority area that are affected by the 'bedroom tax' (having both been assessed as under-occupying, and falling outside exempt groups such as pensioners). Please state the date to which the data is correct.
4. Please state the number of households in council housing in the local authority area that are affected by the 'bedroom tax' that are in arrears on their rent. Please provide the most recent data available and state the date to which the data is correct. If possible within the section 12 cost limit, please additionally state how many of these *particular* households (i.e. those affected by the bedroom tax who are currently in arrears) were already in arrears on 1st April 2013 (notwithstanding that such historical arrears may have since increased).
5. Please detail the number of households in council housing in the local authority area that are affected by the 'bedroom tax' that are in arrears on their rent by respectively: (a) from £50-£99.99; (b) from £100-£499.99; (c) £500 or more. Please provide the most recent data available and state the date to which the data is correct.
6. Please state the number of households in council housing in the local authority area that are affected by the 'bedroom tax' against which the council has commenced eviction proceedings (a) between 1st April 2013 and 30th April 2013; (b) since 1st May 2013, due to unpaid (or late-paid) rent. If the date breakdown in (a) and (b) is not available, please just provide data since 1st April 2013.
7. Does the council have a policy not to evict tenants (including as a 'last resort') who fall into arrears due to the bedroom tax?

Regarding question 1 of this request – while councils would have to prove 'intentional homelessness' on a case-by-case basis, this question is asking whether the council would regard such eviction as evidence of intentional homelessness, subject to proof. It is a question of policy.

Regarding question 2 of this request – if the council's view is that to locate any such correspondence or information would exceed the section 12 cost limit, please state under section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act that the information is not held and respond to the remainder of the request, rather than applying section 12 to the entire request.

Regarding question 6 of this request – if the council is unable to calculate the number of eviction proceedings that have commenced specifically on the grounds of unpaid rent, please provide a figure for all eviction proceedings that have commenced against households affected by the 'bedroom tax' since 1st May 2013.

Also regarding question 6 – 'commencing eviction proceedings' means the initiation of formal eviction proceedings. For example: the sending of a notice seeking possession for English and Welsh secure tenancies; the sending of a notice of proceedings for Scottish tenancies, etc. The sending of notice should generally be considered to be the commencing of eviction proceedings for the purposes of this request. Where the council does not hold the requested information to a question listed above due to the data not being held in the requested manner, please either provide the nearest possible data to that requested in the

manner in which it is held, or alternatively please state that the information is not held for that specific question and fulfil the remainder of the request (rather than applying the section 12 exemption to the whole request).

RESPONSE

1. Yes
2. A questionnaire was sent out in early June but to date only one response has been received which is as follows:

We originally had 20 tenants affected by under occupation in the Tendring area

- 1) 4 have expressed an interest in downsizing to a smaller property (but are still currently resident)
- 2) We have not reclassified any bedrooms
- 3) 4 are now in arrears but 1 was already in arrears but they have increased.
- 4) We would try numerous attempts at contact before serving a notice seeking possession. If no contact or payments had been made to cover the shortfall after 2 months then we would consider serving a notice.

The general consensus is that currently it is too early to be able to gauge the full impact.

3. Please see response to question 2 above.
4. We do not separate those in arrears for bedroom tax to those on any other recent charge.
5. We do not separate those in arrears for bedroom tax to those on any other recent charge.
6. (a) 0 (b) 0.
7. No