

Nicola Hesketh
Project and Information Co Ordinator

Our Ref: FOI4079/NH/02
Please ask for: Nicola Hesketh
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[name redacted]

19th August 2016

Dear [name redacted]

Freedom of Information – Request for Information

With regards to your recent enquiry for information held by the Authority under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. Please find the information you requested below with reference in the box to your original enquiry for clarity where multiple answers are required.

Details of Your Request

I am seeking information about the number of eligible applicants who unsuccessfully applied for Discretionary Housing Payments to your council in the most recent financial year (April 1 2015 to March 31 2016).

By “eligible applicants,” I mean DHP applicants who were in receipt of housing benefit (or the housing component of Universal Credit) and who applied for a Discretionary Housing Payment for help with housing payment problems that DHPs can be used to cover (for example, the bedroom tax, rent shortfall due to LHA caps, rent in advance and tenancy deposit assistance, etc).

Could you send me answers to these questions:

1) How many applications for Discretionary Housing Payments were made to your council by eligible applicants in the 2015-2016 financial year?

2) How many of those applications were rejected/unsuccessful?

3) What were the five main reasons that eligible DHP applicants had their DHP applications turned down in the 2015-2016 financial year?

4) If one of the reasons that eligible applicants were turned down was that application forms were not adequately completed, could you please let me know:

-if the council follows up inadequately completed forms with applicants and how – does the council contact applicants to ask for missing information, or offer a service to help applicants fill in forms correctly if they have support needs?

- what information do applicants in these cases generally neglect to include – is it supporting information (such as bank statements) that is left out, or do people not complete fields in the application forms?

5) Does your council restrict the number of DHP awards an applicant can receive? If Yes, how many awards can an eligible applicant receive? Are they excluded from multiple applications even if their financial circumstances remain the same/don't improve?

6) Are DHPs ever awarded to applicants who do not complete your formal application forms – for example, will your council award DHPs to applicants whose councillors or support workers apply on their behalf by email or phone call? If Yes, how many DHPs were awarded that way in the 2015-2016 financial year?

7) Did your council exceed its government Discretionary Housing Payment allocation in the 2015-2016 financial year? Did your council top up its government allocation?

8) Did your council return any DHP monies to the DWP as unspent in the 2015-2016 financial year? If Yes, what was the total amount returned?

9) How many applications for Discretionary Housing Payments were made to your council by eligible applicants in the 2014-2015 financial year?

The response to your request as follows:

1) 359

2) 268

3) Multiple applications/available disposable income/already on full HB/proof of specific outgoings not supplied/not actively seeking to downsize property

4) n/a

- We write to ask for proof of extraneously high outgoings

- As above – proof of high outgoings is requested

5) No restriction but each case assessed individually – if we have had multiple applications and the claimant is not actively seeking to downsize property where there is an under occupancy sanction or an LHA restriction, eventually the claim will be rejected

6) No – claim form required in every case – although some may then be extended

7) No/ No

8) Yes, £881 returned and £92771 spent

9) 524

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Details of Tamworth Borough Council's internal review and complaints procedure are attached, in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

Yours Sincerely

Nicola Hesketh
Project and Information Coordinator