

Freedom of Information Request 1365-1819

Request

Please can I request the following information under the Freedom of Information Act:

- 1a) In £, the total amount of Council Tax which was unpaid, by municipal year from 2012/13 and including any arrears in 2018/19 to date);
- 1b) The total amount of Council Tax, in £, which was owed but never paid by Universal Credit claimants since 2012/13 (broken down by municipal year and including any arrears in 2018/19 to date);
- 1c) The number of households in receipt of Universal Credit which are currently in arrears on their Council Tax;
- 2) Since the national introduction of Universal Credit from 2013 onwards, has your authority had to reduce the number of housing officers dealing with benefits queries because of a reduction in government funding? If so, please provide figures for government funding (in £) and staffing numbers (in Full Time Equivalents) before and after these reductions.

Following Clarification

For Q1a and 1b, the requester is looking for the amount in £ which was unpaid as of the end of that year, not the amount that remains outstanding today.

And For Q2, the requester is referring to housing benefit officers, or anyone who deals with housing benefit enquiries.

Response

Question 1a

The following table shows the amount of Council Tax outstanding for each financial year from 2012/13 as at 31st March of that year.

The table shows;

- The total arrears
- The total arrears regardless of the financial year to which it related

The outstanding amount for each year will have reduced as subsequent payments have been received.

Year	Outstanding balance as at 31 st March for that specific year only	Total Outstanding balance as at 31 st March regardless of the financial year to which it related
2012 / 2013	£2.520m	£6,340m
2013 / 2014	£3.249m	£6.553m
2014 / 2015	£3.727m	£8,074m
2015 / 2016	£3.113m	£7.902m
2016 / 2017	£3.300m	£8.068m
2017 / 2018	£3.935m	£9.383m
2018 / 2019	£4.508m	£10.878m

Question 1b and 1c

We are unable to provide this information as the Council does not hold income details of all those who are registered for Council Tax.

The council would only be aware of a Council Tax payer being in receipt of Universal Credit if they are also in receipt of Council Tax Support which is not necessarily the case.

Question 2

Whilst Universal Credit has been rolled out since 2013, Rotherham Job-Centres only became Full Service areas in July 2018.

The Council has not as yet had to reduce the number of officers dealing with housing benefit as a direct result of reductions in Government funding specifically related to the Council becoming a Full Service area for Universal Credit in July 2018. However, in common with all Councils, the total amount of Government funding provided to the Council has reduced year on year since 2010, which has required the Council to identify over £200m of budget savings, some of which have been made within the Revenues and Benefits Service.