



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government**

Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Tel: 030 3444 0000

www.gov.uk/mhclg

Mr Paul Burnham
What Do They Know

Date: **23 April 2021**

Dear Mr Burnham,

Freedom of Information Act 2000 - 10846558

Thank you for your request for information which we received on 26 March 2021 and processed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You requested:

1. The number of First Let General Needs Social Rent lets in each London local housing authority area in 2016/17, 2017/18, and 2018/19 with a total number and a breakdown by LA and PRP, with the number of lets by each number of bedrooms.

2. Mean average rents (exclusive of service charge) for these lets, with breakdowns by LA and PRP, for each London local housing authority area, and by the number of bedrooms in each case. In each case, in the 'Notes' to the tables which you have supplied, you say 'Tenancies with 4+ bedrooms have been merged into a single category in line with our standard statistical disclosure policy to ensure data confidentiality'.

I am now requesting that this information is provided with 4, 5, and 6+ beds shown separately.

This is in order to assess outcomes of public policy regarding these three distinct categories of properties, which each have separate Social Rent formulas, and separate amounts for the Social Rent Cap.

The Freedom of Information Act obliges you to ask whether the full requested data is held by you (I believe that it is); and then to consider whether there is any valid reason why it should not be released.

The reference in response to previous questions to merging all 4+ beds together as part of a 'standard statistical disclosure policy to ensure data confidentiality', as mentioned above, is not an acceptable explanation for non-disclosure.

Instead, I request that you follow the same approach for 4, 5 and 6+ beds as for 1, 2,

and 3 beds; an approach which you have detailed in the Notes to the tables supplied in answer to the previous questions referenced above:

'Mean rents and/or charges have been suppressed where there were fewer than 3 lets in a category (i.e. for that number of bedrooms in that LA area by that provider) as counts of fewer than 3 are not deemed robust enough for use'.

I would be therefore be grateful if you could release the data for 4, 5 and 6+ beds as requested.

We can confirm that we hold this information, but we are withholding it as explained below.

This information is exempt from disclosure under section 40(2) of the FOI Act as it is personal, about another individual and, as that person could not reasonably expect that his or her personal information would be disclosed, doing so would breach UK data protection legislation.

We cannot provide data where the numbers of individuals involved are fewer than five as there is a risk of individuals being identified, either directly or via cross-reference with other information in the public domain. Given the data is already filtered on first social lets of newbuilds, split by local authority and private registered providers by bedroom size, the counts in the columns for each local authority are already very small. The Department therefore considers that providing the further breakdown you have requested would be potentially disclosive. The application of the section 40(2) exemption under these circumstances is in line with professional Government Statistical Service guidance on Data Privacy and Confidentiality.

Complaints procedure

If you are unhappy with this response, we will review it and report back to you. (This is called an internal review.) If you want us to do this, let us know by return email within two months of receiving this response. You can also ask by letter addressed to:

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Knowledge and Information Access Team
4th Floor SE, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF

If you are unhappy with the outcome of this internal review, you can ask the independent Information Commissioner to investigate. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at email address casewoxx@xxx.xxx.xx or use their online form at ico.org.uk/concerns or call them on 0303 123 1113.

Kind regards,

MHCLG FOI Team