

Freedom of Information – Response – 26873

We write to make a Freedom of Information (FOI) request with respect to the debt collection practices of local authorities in relation to victims of domestic abuse, including economic abuse, with a specific focus on coerced debt 1.

1. Council tax arrears

(a) What is the total value (£) of council tax arrears currently held by the authority?

(b) How many individual accounts are currently in council tax arrears?

(c) How many council tax accounts were referred to enforcement agents (e.g. bailiffs) in the last 24 months?

1 Section 1(4) of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines economic abuse as any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on another person's ability to:

(a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or

(b) obtain goods or services.

0152293-0000001 UKO1: 2022892861.1 2

2. Support to Victim-Survivors of Domestic Abuse

(a) In the last 24 months, how many residents experiencing domestic abuse has the council supported with debt-related relief or support (e.g. council tax reductions, payment plans, discretionary hardship payments, write-offs)?

(b) Does the authority record or monitor whether a resident requesting debt relief has experienced domestic abuse? If so, how many such cases have been recorded in the last 24 months?

3. Debt Recovery and Domestic Abuse Policies

(a) Does the authority have any policies, procedures, or guidance documents that refer to domestic abuse as a consideration in debt recovery processes (including enforcement, recovery pauses, or alternative arrangements)? Please provide a copy or link.

(b) Does the authority have any policies, procedures, or guidance that include domestic abuse as a factor in determining eligibility for council tax write-offs or reductions under Section 13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992?

4. Discretionary Write-Off Monitoring

(a) Does the authority monitor or record the use of discretionary council tax write-offs granted under Section 13A(1)(c)?

(b) If yes: How many discretionary council tax write-off requests were (i) received and (ii) approved and (iii) not approved in the last 24 months?

(c) In how many of those (i) received (ii) approved and (iii) not approved cases was domestic abuse recorded as a contributing factor or reason for the request?

(d) Does the authority monitor and record the decision maker and decision-making time scale for council tax write offs? If yes: (i) Who was the decision maker for these cases and (ii) what was the average time taken to make a decision and (iii) were individuals given a written explanation when a request is refused?

We are writing to advise you that, following a search of our paper and electronic records, it has been established that the information you requested is not held by Suffolk County Council.

If you have not already done so, then you may wish to write to the Borough and District Councils of Suffolk:

- Babergh Mid Suffolk District Council

[Freedom of Information - Babergh District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk](http://babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk)

- East Suffolk

https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/home/SearchForm/?url=/home/SearchForm&Search=freedom+of+information&fo=8&action_results=Go

- West Suffolk

<https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/Council/Data-and-information/freedom-of-information.cfm>

- Ipswich Borough Council

<https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/search?s=freedom+of+information>

5. Approaches to Other Public Sector Debts

(a) Does the authority have policies or guidance in place relating to recovery of other public sector debts (e.g. housing arrears, benefit overpayments, social care charges)?

Adult social care (ASC) have a debt management policy (link below)

(b) Do any of these policies explicitly reference domestic abuse as a relevant factor in debt recovery or relief decisions?

No explicit reference to domestic abuse, though within the 'key principles' of the policy, is a consideration to "Ensuring that principles protecting the rights of vulnerable Adults underpin all actions and that where there are issues of financial mismanagement or exploitation, appropriate investigations are carried out under the relevant Adult Safeguarding policy and procedures."

(c) Please provide copies or links to these policies.

Attached [Adult Social Care \(ASC\) debt management - Suffolk County Council](#)

6. Enforcement Agents

(a) Are external enforcement agents used for council tax recovery? If yes, please provide the name(s) of current suppliers.

(b) Did your procurement or process for selection of external enforcement agents consider vulnerability in relation to domestic abuse?

(c) Do your contracts with these suppliers set out requirements on vulnerability in relation to domestic abuse?

0152293-0000001 UKO1: 2022892861.1 3

(d) Do you share vulnerability relating to domestic abuse with enforcement agents, and if so under what policy or data sharing agreement? Please provide copy of the applicable data sharing agreement, if available.

We are writing to advise you that, following a search of our paper and electronic records, it has been established that the information you requested is not held by Suffolk County Council.

If you have not already done so, then you may wish to write to the Borough and District Councils of Suffolk:

- Babergh Mid Suffolk District Council

[Freedom of Information - Babergh District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk](http://babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk)

- East Suffolk

https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/home/SearchForm/?url=/home/SearchForm&Search=freedom+of+information&fo=8&action_results=Go

- West Suffolk

<https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/Council/Data-and-information/freedom-of-information.cfm>

- Ipswich Borough Council

<https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/search?s=freedom+of+information>

7. Training and practice

(a) Are your staff required to undertake training that include identifying signs of domestic abuse?

Yes

(b) Are your staff required to undertake training that includes identifying signs of economic abuse?

Yes