

FOI REF:	15001
RESPONSE SENT:	20/12/2024

Request

Under the freedom of information act could you please answer the following questions:

Policies

Does Winchester Council currently have an active policy on how they approach housing benefit overpayments?

The one listed in your documents is dated 2002 so is that still active or has it been replaced?

Data

1. In your data policies it states that information stored about an individual can be shared amongst the various departments within the council.

Can you describe how difficult it is for one department to gain access to that information from a different department?

How long would it take for a department to view information held in a different department?

2. In the past 3 years (broken down yearly) how many individuals were discovered to have been overpaid housing benefit?

3. From that number, how many people did Winchester Council decide to recover the payments from?

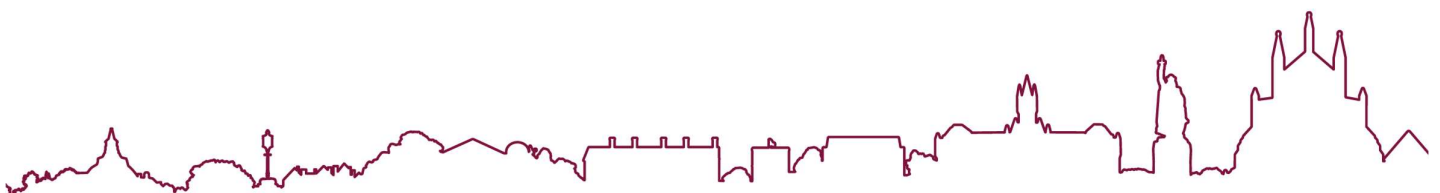
4. How many of these cases ended up going to the first tier tribunal to be decided?

5. Of those judgements made by the tribunal how many found in the council's favour?

6. How much on average does it cost the council when a case is taken to a tribunal?

Response

Policies:



Winchester City Council does not have a current Housing Benefit Overpayments Policy.

Data:

1. FOI is a request for information held by the Council – a request for an explanation of how difficult it is for one department to access personal data held by another, is not information that is held by the Council for FOI purposes.

However, by way of an explanation, outside of FOI, when one team within the Council receives a request for information from another team, there are different considerations depending on which team is requesting the information. For example, Council Tax and Elections teams have statutory powers that require other departments, and other organisations to provide them with information that they request.

In relation to most other requests for information from another council department, personal data is only disclosed where it is necessary for the purposes of crime prevention or detection (including fraud), or sometimes with the explicit consent of the individual concerned.

2. 01/04/2021 to 31/03/2022:- 955 individuals

01/04/2022 to 31/03/2023:- 739 individuals

01/04/2023 to 31/03/2024:- 618 individuals

3. Our reporting shows how many overpayments were written off in a particular financial year. These overpayments may relate to overpayments which were created in the year in which they were written off or, within a previous financial year.

01/04/2021 to 31/03/2022:- we decided to recover from 913 individuals

01/04/2022 to 31/03/2023:- we decided to recover from 685 individuals

01/04/2023 to 31/03/2024:- we decided to recover from 582 individuals

4. None
5. N/A
6. £503

