

## 60269 Debt Collection Practices

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.

Information currently in the public domain

### Council tax arrears

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

Please refer to the table below. This provides details of all accounts with an outstanding Council Tax balance for the relevant year. Not all amounts will constitute arrears if the Council Tax that is payable is not due until a date in the future. Whilst this caveat applies to all years it is particularly important to consider for the current year and results in the figures being heavily inflated for 2025/26. For example, a large amount of Council Tax will be due before the end of March 2026 for customers who pay over 12 instalments and this shouldn't constitute arrears.

<b>2025/26</b>	£42,723,992.51
<b>2024/25</b>	£21,208,093.01
<b>2023/24</b>	£18,424,367.53
<b>2022/23</b>	£13,696,008.04
<b>2021/22</b>	£13,931,902.85
<b>2020/21</b>	£14,071,219.81
<b>2019/20</b>	£12,103,523.85
<b>2018/19</b>	£11,031,494.51
<b>2017/18</b>	£10,441,155.44
<b>2016/17</b>	£10,087,933.23
<b>2015/16</b>	£9,603,751.67
<b>2014/15</b>	£9,375,222.84
<b>2013/14</b>	£9,694,144.28
<b>2012/13</b>	£9,940,554.41
<b>2011/12</b>	£9,656,795.72
<b>2010/11</b>	£9,413,762.04
<b>2009/10</b>	£10,212,725.27
<b>2008/09</b>	£10,785,835.17
<b>2007/08</b>	£9,851,737.63
<b>2006/07</b>	£10,023,370.39
<b>2005/06</b>	£10,075,154.81

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

Please refer to the table below and the notes provided in A1a.

<b>2025/26</b>	92,702
<b>2024/25</b>	31,883
<b>2023/24</b>	27,761
<b>2022/23</b>	24,948

<b>2021/22</b>	25,741
<b>2020/21</b>	25,046
<b>2019/20</b>	25,093
<b>2018/19</b>	23,322
<b>2017/18</b>	22,776
<b>2016/17</b>	23,453
<b>2015/16</b>	23,074
<b>2014/15</b>	23,150
<b>2013/14</b>	25,231
<b>2012/13</b>	24,867
<b>2011/12</b>	24,334
<b>2010/11</b>	23,485
<b>2009/10</b>	24,742
<b>2008/09</b>	23,790
<b>2007/08</b>	23,488
<b>2006/07</b>	24,242
<b>2005/06</b>	22,954

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

There are none. Bailiffs do not operate in Scotland.

### **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?

This information is not held as we do not categorise customers' circumstances in this way.

### **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?

Other than our [Corporate Debt Policy](#) published on our website at:

<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/38535/corporate-debt-policy-2025>

we are not aware of any other specific policies, procedures or guidance that deals with these questions. The legislation referred to in Q3b is not applicable in Scotland.

## **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

(ii) approved

(iii) not approved in the last 24 months?

(c) In how many of those

(i) received

(ii) approved

(iii) not approved cases was domestic abuse recorded as a contributing factor or reason for the request?

(c) 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

(ii) what was the average time taken to make a decision

(iii) were individuals given a written explanation when a request is refused?

[Not applicable. This legislation is not applicable in Scotland.](#)

## **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)?

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

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

[Other than the Corporate Debt Policy referenced in A3 above, we are not aware of any other specific policies or guidance that deals with these questions.](#)

## **Enforcement Agents**

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

[Yes, we have a dual Sheriff Officer contract with Scott & Co \(our primary provider\) and Walker Love.](#)

- (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?
  
- (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.

Our Sheriff Officer contract has recently concluded the process of being retendered. It positions that providers are required to operate a Customer Care policy which includes arrangements for dealing with violent and vulnerable citizens.

Although we hold a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA), we do not have a Data Sharing Agreement for this contract. The sharing of customer information is however covered under our Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates Privacy Notice, published on our website at:

<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/26250/council-tax-and-non-domestic-rates-privacy-notice>

Whilst we may provide details of these customers to both Scott & Co and Walker Love in the delivery of our services, it is possible they may also have their own policies for on dealing with vulnerable customers.

### **Training and practice**

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

The Council has an internal learning management system available to all employees, which includes various courses on the subject of domestic abuse. In the context of Council Tax and Corporate Debt Recovery, officers are also encouraged to contact their Line Manager if they have any concerns in dealing with customers who potentially fall into either of these categories.