



Please provide the following information: The 12-month period in this response is  
1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

## 1. Homeless Applications and Interim Accommodation:

- 1.1 Over the past twelve months, how many people have made a homeless application to the Council?
- 1.2 Over the past twelve months, how many people have been provided with interim accommodation pursuant to Section 188(1) of the Housing Act 1996?
- 1.3 Over the past twelve months, how many people have been provided with interim accommodation pursuant to Section 189(b) of the Housing Act 1996?
- 1.4 Over the past twelve months, what was the total cost of providing interim accommodation?
  - a) What proportion of this cost was paid to Travelodge and/or any of its parent companies/subsidiaries?
  - b) What was the total amount paid to Travelodge and/or its related entities over the past twelve months?

1.1 4154

1.2 620

1.3 We do not hold the information that you have requested in an easily retrievable format. Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) relieves a public authority from the obligation to comply with a request for information where the estimated time required to locate, review and extract the information exceeds a certain threshold set out in Regulations.

The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/3244) set out the rules in relation to the cost limit (otherwise called the "appropriate limit"). These Regulations are published by the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) and are viewable on their web site from this link: [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2004/uksi\\_20043244\\_en.pdf](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2004/uksi_20043244_en.pdf)

The Regulations set out the cost limit for Government departments and for other public authorities. For local government, Regulation 3 states that the cost limit is £450 and Regulation 4(4) states that the prescribed hourly rate is £25. Regulation 4(4) further provides that where the local authority estimates the time taken to gather the information would exceed this limit (which based on the prescribed hourly rate, equates to 18 officer hours), it may refuse the request under section 12 of FoIA. I am satisfied the cost limit applies to your request and will explain why this is the case.

*Without manually investigating all 620 records, we are unable to differentiate at which point a Homeless household entered temporary accommodation, whether this was during the Relief stage or Final duty stage. This response itself would take beyond the specified time of the total FOI request, (5 minutes per case = approx. 3100 minutes/51 hours).*

1.4 £5,623,467.00

1.4a 0.0004%

1.4b £2,523.00

## 2. Temporary Accommodation Expenditure and Associated Costs:

- 2.1 What has been the total expenditure on interim temporary accommodation (e.g., Travelodge, B&Bs) for homeless individuals over the past three financial years?
- 2.2 Please provide a breakdown of these costs by location, including the number of placements made outside the borough.
- 2.3 What has been the total expenditure on affiliated costs such as storage, taxis, and other related services for individuals placed in temporary accommodation outside the borough over the past three financial years?
- 2.4 Please provide details of these costs by category (e.g., storage, transportation, etc.) and location.

2.1 2023/24 £5,623,467.00  
2022/23 £3,370,131.00  
2021/22 £1,976,829.00

- 2.2 The location of temporary accommodation is not appropriate to share and is exempt from disclosure under Section 38 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Section 38 (i)(b) states that information is exempt if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, endanger the safety of any individual. Disclosure under the FoIA is deemed to be to the world at large. To disclose the locations to the world at large would put at risk the safety of vulnerable homeless households accommodated in those locations, including Domestic Abuse victims and households fleeing their Homes.

As this is a qualified exemption, the Council is required to undertake a public interest test. The Council acknowledges its obligations of transparency and accountability in all its undertakings. However, in this case, the safeguarding of vulnerable individuals would be put at risk by publishing the location of temporary accommodation and clearly outweighs the public interest in the transparency of information.

- 2.3 This is not something we record but it is rare that we place Households out of borough in Wigan.
- 2.4 As detailed in 2.3, this is not something we record.

### 3. Protection of Personal Property for Homeless Applicants:

- 3.1 Over the past twelve months, how many homeless applicants have had their personal property protected by the local authority?
- 3.2 What is the average length of time that a homeless applicant's personal property is stored by the local authority?
- 3.3 What is the average cost of storing a homeless applicant's personal property while they are in interim accommodation?
- 3.4 Under what circumstances does the local authority protect the personal property of homeless applicants?
- 3.5 As part of the homeless application process, does the local authority expressly ask the homeless applicant whether they need their personal property protected? If not, please state the reasons why this question is not asked.
- 3.6 Please provide copies of the local authority's policies regarding homeless applications.
- 3.7 Please provide a copy of the local authority's policy regarding the protection of the personal property of homeless applicants.
- 3.8 Please disclose a copy of the council's homeless procedures manual or policy document followed by housing solutions officers at its homeless service centres/homeless persons offices.
- 3.9 Over the past three years, how many complaints have been made by homeless applicants regarding the council's failure to protect their personal property?

3.1 – 3.3 This is not data that we capture as part of our day-to-day service. To check if a household was provided with storage, we would have to manually review all the cases that duties were accepted on over the 12-month period, this is not something we could complete within the designated time frame for the request. (given that there were 4154 Homeless applications during this period, it would take approximately 15 minutes to review the notes on each case). See S12 exemption response at Q1.3.

3.4 & 3.5 As part of the Homeless assessment the team will ask the homeless household about their plans in terms of storage/furniture etc and if the households have no plans and unable to make their own arrangements, we will arrange storage for the household, this may also include removals.

3.6 – 3.8 All information relating to homelessness policies and approach are detailed on the Wigan Council website. (Link attached) [Homelessness \(wigan.gov.uk\)](http://wigan.gov.uk)

3.9 We do not have a record of the specific nature of complaints so unable to provide this information.

#### 4. Proactive Measures to Reduce Temporary Accommodation Costs:

- 4.1 What specific measures has the council taken to reduce the reliance on temporary accommodation outside the borough, such as Travelodge and B&Bs?
  - 4.2 Has the council developed or initiated any programs to increase the availability of local temporary accommodation, particularly through the use of empty properties or land within the borough? If so, please provide details.
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- 4.1 It is rare that Wigan uses temporary accommodation out of borough, and is often only cases whereby they cannot be safely accommodated in borough due to risk, and the only option to keep them safe would be to place them out of borough. Over the past 12-18 months we have increased our number of temporary accommodation units by working with private landlords and housing partners to create a larger portfolio of accommodation in borough, which has reduced the need to use out of borough accommodation and hotels.
  - 4.2 This forms part of our Empty Homes Strategy. (Link attached) [Microsoft Word - Empty Homes Strategy - Graphic Desin AM edits \(wigan.gov.uk\)](#)

#### 5. Utilisation of Empty Properties and Land:

- 5.1 How many empty properties and parcels of land are currently owned by the council that could potentially be used for temporary accommodation?
  - 5.2 Has the council considered or initiated any compulsory purchase orders (CPOs) to acquire vacant properties for conversion into temporary accommodation? If so, please provide details, including the number of properties targeted, the outcome, and associated costs.
  - 5.3 What steps has the council taken to encourage community/ non-profit groups or social enterprises to make use of disused land or buildings via adverse possession for temporary accommodation or support services? Please provide examples, if any.
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- 5.1 There are no empty properties owned by the Council at the moment. Both this and land parcels are currently being looked at as part of Empty Homes and wider work.
  - 5.2 All options are currently being looked at as part of our wider work.
  - 5.3 We work with and commission a range of VCSE partners to deliver services in this area. An example is local charity, The Brick, operating a temporary accommodation and support scheme from a previously vacant Council owned building.

## 6. Comparative Models and Best Practices:

- 6.1 Is the council aware of successful models such as Calderwood House in Cumbria, where an empty property (a former police station) was transformed into temporary accommodation and support services? If so, has the council explored similar initiatives within the borough? Please provide details of any discussions, plans, or actions taken.
- 6.2 Has the council considered offering similar arrangements, such as a peppercorn rent, to community groups or social enterprises willing to repurpose empty properties for temporary accommodation or support services? If not, what are the reasons for not pursuing this option?

6.1 We're not aware of Calderwood House, but we have developed a similar arrangement as detailed in 5.3.

6.2 We would consider all options, and the example provided in 5.3 and referred to in 6.1 is an example of this.

## 7. Support Services for Individuals in Temporary Accommodation:

- 7.1 What support services does the council currently provide for individuals placed in temporary accommodation outside the borough, particularly in terms of maintaining their connection to local support networks, healthcare providers, and other essential services?
- 7.2 Are there any programs in place to assist individuals in transitioning from temporary accommodation outside the borough to permanent housing within the borough? If so, please provide details on the nature of the support provided, outcomes, and costs.

7.1 We have several Support Services across the council, who can provide support to households in temporary accommodation, such as our Resettlement Workers, Tenancy Support workers, and Complex Dependency Workers. We have also supported with transport, such as bus passes to enable households to commute between their temporary accommodation placements. We have a good working relationship with a number of partner agencies to ensure that a collaborative package of support can be provided to households placed out of borough.

7.2 There are no specific programs in place other than the support already outlined, as advised it is also rare that in Wigan we place out of borough and if we do, it is often for a reason to support the household not as a detriment to them.

## 8. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Complaints:

- 8.1 How does the council monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its temporary accommodation placements, particularly those made outside the borough? Please provide any available data on the impact of these placements on residents, including any assessments of detriment or distress caused.
  - 8.2 Has the council conducted any cost-benefit analysis comparing the current expenditure on temporary accommodation outside the borough with potential savings from investing in local solutions (e.g., repurposing empty properties)? If so, please provide the findings
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- 8.1 We encourage feedback on all our temporary accommodation placements, around their experience whilst in temporary accommodation and standards/quality of accommodation. We also work closely with the Housing Standards Team to ensure the quality of accommodation is suitable for our homeless households. We encourage officers to regular visit households in temporary accommodation to ensure support is offered and any concerns can be addressed early. We don't hold specific data on this as we respond via the approaches outlined above.
  - 8.2 We are constantly reviewing the overall costs of temporary accommodation, not specifically around out of borough accommodation as this is rarely used but all accommodation. There is ongoing appraisal work in this area to identify new and cost effective in borough solutions.