



Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I am requesting the following information regarding dog-related noise complaints in your council area:

1. The total number of complaints received about dog barking between January 2022 and May 2024.

445 (01/01/2022 – 31/05/2022)

2. If recorded, how many of these complaints referred to barking occurring in early morning hours (between 4:00am and 8:00am)?

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: opsi.gov.uk

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.

The information requested comes in on diary sheets that are scanned to the casefile. To retrieve this information would entail a manual interrogation of the incidents referred to in the response to question 1 (445). A random test was undertaken on one such case (*one of the less intricate ones – having only one diary sheet*) and the task took just under eight minutes. If all cases took even half this amount of time I would estimate that it would take almost 30 hours – far in excess of the officer hours stipulated in the FOI Act.

3. Any available data or summary that categorises complaints by:

- Time of day
- Reason for complaint (e.g., persistent noise, sleep disturbance, early wake-ups)

When investigating a statutory nuisance complaint, the three main things an officer will assess are duration, frequency and impact.

Duration: how long does the noise last for. Is it occasional, is it persistent.

Frequency: how often does it happen?

Impact: does the noise affect the reasonable use and enjoyment of the complainant's own home.

Time of day is recorded on diary sheets by the complainant. It is not transferred onto our casefile in a reportable way (as per response to question 2).

Reason for complaint is logged as 'dog barking' only. The issues caused by barking dogs are then detailed by the complainant on their diary sheets.

Complainants are asked to detail the following things on their diary sheet:

- Date of noise
- Time of noise starting
- Time of noise stopping
- Nature of disturbance
- Effect of the noise on them and their family
- Any other notes/comments

It is worth noting that diary sheets alone do not determine the outcome of a case. They assist an officer in how to progress. This could be no further action, it could be noise monitoring equipment, or an officer attending the complainant's property at key times, if appropriate/applicable.