

26 July 2024

**Our Ref: FOI 459**

## **Request**

We received your request on 26 June 2024 for the following information:

*Is it possible to obtain details of how long households are waiting for a final social housing placement (not including temporary accommodation) for each council area?*

*And is it possible to determine the longest individual wait/ how many people are sitting at the higher end of waiting times and what area they are based in?*

On 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024 you provided the below response to our request for clarification:

- *Could you provide both allocation data (average waiting time at the point of allocation) or Waiting List data (average waiting time on the Waiting List as of 31/03/2024)? by council area.*
- *Would it be possible to provide the single longest recorded wait time without providing any further information on the individual in question - only how long they waited until allocation?*
- *How many applicants have been on the Waiting List for over 5 years or more by council area would also be helpful.*

On 23<sup>rd</sup> July you provided further clarification regarding part 2 of your request and agreed that data showing the spread of waiting times of all applicants on the Waiting List as at 31/03/2024 would better meet your needs than one individual waiting time.

Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

## **Our response**

1. ***Could you provide both allocation data (average waiting time at the point of allocation) or Waiting List data (average waiting time on the Waiting List as of 31/03/2024)? by council area.***

Table 1 below provides data on the number of housing allocations to applicants on the Waiting List for a 5-year period from 01/04/2019 to 31/03/2024 with Mean & Median Waiting Time (in months) by Local Government District.

Local Government District	Allocations from 01/04/2019 to 31/03/2024		
	No. of allocations	Mean Months at the point of allocation	Median Months at the point of allocations
Antrim & Newtownabbey	2,419	23.6	13.0
Ards & North Down	2,761	21.8	12.0
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	2,296	23.7	14.0
Belfast	8,215	29.5	19.0
Causeway Coast & Glens	2,013	26.6	16.0
Derry & Strabane	3,552	30.4	20.0
Fermanagh & Omagh	1,189	22.0	14.0
Lisburn & Castlereagh	1,959	25.2	17.0
Mid & East Antrim	2,444	23.1	13.0
Mid Ulster	1,446	25.0	14.0
Newry, Mourne & Down	1,921	31.8	21.0
<b>N. Ireland Total</b>	<b>30,215</b>	<b>26.6</b>	<b>16.0</b>

Table 2 below provides data on the number of applicant households on the Waiting List as at 31/03/2024 with Mean & Median Waiting Time (in months) by Local Government District.

Both tables must be viewed in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Local Government District	Applicants on the Waiting List as at 31/03/2024		
	No. of applicant households	Mean Months on the Waiting List	Median Months on the Waiting List
Antrim & Newtownabbey	3,434	43.1	26.0
Ards & North Down	3,284	47.9	29.0
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	3,916	40.3	25.0
Belfast	12,726	53.2	37.0
Causeway Coast & Glens	3,758	46.9	32.0
Derry & Strabane	6,106	49.3	33.0
Fermanagh & Omagh	2,154	40.2	25.0
Lisburn & Castlereagh	2,516	49.4	35.0
Mid & East Antrim	3,161	42.0	26.0
Mid Ulster	2,271	42.6	25.0
Newry, Mourne & Down	3,986	53.5	38.0

<b>N. Ireland Total</b>	<b>47,312</b>	<b>48.0</b>	<b>32.0</b>
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**Notes:**

- *This response is based on the most recently published data (allocations up to 31/03/2024).*
- *Allocations are aggregated over a 5-year period from 01/04/2019 to 31/03/2024 and include allocations to both Housing Executive and housing association properties.*
- *Waiting List data is a snapshot of the Waiting List as it was on the last day of the specified quarter, in this case 31/03/24.*
- *The MEAN is the arithmetic average and as a statistic can often be unreliable, having been skewed by significant outliers i.e. applicants who have been on the Waiting List for a number of years.*  
*This degree of skewing makes the arithmetic average, the MEAN, unreliable. Therefore, following expert advice on this matter a methodology that utilises the MEDIAN (a measure of central tendency) as a more reliable indicator in relation to Waiting Lists and Allocations is also provided.*

**2. Data on length of waiting time of all applicants on the Waiting List as at 31/03/2024.**

Of applicant households on the Waiting List as of 31/03/2024 we can disclose that:

- 71.7% of applicant households had been on the Waiting List for 5 years or less;
- 91.3% of applicant households had been on the Waiting List for 10 years or less;
- 95% of applicant households had been on the waiting list for 12.5 years or less.

Using the interquartile range method for outlier detection (a data point is considered an outlier if it is more than 1.5\*IQR above the third quartile), we can determine that applications with the waiting time of more than 12.5 years are statistical outliers and therefore are not representative of the typical experience of applicant households; waiting times within this group range from 12.5 years to more than 40 years.

It is important to note that all applicant households on the Waiting List are assessed and awarded points according to their housing need. It is the level of points awarded that determines their position on the Waiting List rather than the date of their application alone. Any eligible person may apply under the Housing Selection Scheme regardless of their level of housing need and they may choose to remain on the Waiting List as part of the annual renewal exercise for as long as they wish, even if awarded zero points under the Housing Selection Scheme.

The factors that may generally impact on the amount of time a person is on the Waiting List include:

- Housing need- number of points awarded under the Housing Selection Scheme
- Type of accommodation required
- Area of Choice selected:
  - being very high demand and requiring a high number of points

- having a very low number of properties with low stock turnover.

**3. How many applicants have been on the Waiting List for over 5 years or more by council area would also be helpful.**

Table 3 below provides data on the number of applicants on the Waiting List as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 who have been on the list for 5 years or more by Council Area. As advised above, it is important to note that there are a range of factors that can influence how long an applicant may be on the Waiting List and each case is unique to that individual.

<b>Applicants with waiting times in excess of 5 years on the Waiting List at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024</b>		
<b>Local Government District</b>	<b>Applicants in Housing Stress*</b>	<b>All Applicants</b>
Antrim & Newtownabbey	772	867
Ards & North Down	681	855
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	633	870
Belfast	3,613	4,140
Causeway Coast & Glens	713	973
Derry & Strabane	1,693	1,893
Fermanagh & Omagh	374	462
Lisburn & Castlereagh	633	762
Mid & East Antrim	585	725
Mid Ulster	420	559
Newry, Mourne & Down	1,185	1301
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>11,302</b>	<b>13,407</b>

*\*Housing Stress is applicants awarded 30 or more points under the Housing Selection Scheme.*

This concludes our response.