



Homes England

Date: 10 August 2023

Our Ref: RFI4418

Tel: 0300 1234 500

Email: infogov@homesengland.gov.uk

[REDACTED]
By Email Only

Dear [REDACTED]

RE: Request for Information – RFI4418

Thank you for your request for information which was processed in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

You requested the following information:

- 1. Please provide details on the standard procedure and expected timeframes for the redemption of a Help to Buy loan, specifically in cases where the current property valuation at the time of redemption is lower than the original purchase price.**
- 2. Could you provide information on the average time it has taken for Help to Buy loan redemptions to be processed and completed in the last two years, broken down by whether the property valuation was lower, the same as, or higher than the original purchase price?**
- 3. Please provide data on the number of Help to Buy loan redemption applications that are currently in process and those completed in the last two years, alongside the average processing times for each year, specifically focusing on cases where the property valuation at the time of redemption was lower than the original purchase price.**
- 4. I would like to request any internal guidance, procedures, or service-level agreements that relate to the handling and processing of Help to Buy loan redemptions in cases where the property valuation is lower than the original purchase price.**
- 5. Please provide details on the channels and procedures available for applicants to escalate issues and/or complaints regarding the loan redemption process, and statistics on the number of**





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escalations/complaints in the last two years related to cases where the property valuation was lower than the original purchase price.

6. Could you provide information on the nature and resolution of any systemic issues which have led to delays in the loan redemption process in the last two years, specifically in cases where the current property valuation was lower than the original purchase price?

7. Are there any documented internal discussions or correspondence at senior level regarding the treatment, strategy, or policies relating to Help to Buy loan redemptions where property valuations have fallen below the original purchase price? If so, could you provide a summary of these discussions, including any references to delaying or deferring redemptions in such cases?

8. Are there any recorded instances where concerns regarding Help to Buy loan redemptions in the context of decreased property valuation have been raised internally or externally? If so, how have these concerns been addressed?

Response

We can inform you that we do hold the information that you have requested. However, to comply with your request would exceed the appropriate limit for the cost of compliance. We therefore rely on section 12, exemption where the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit under the FOIA.

The full text of the legislation can be found on the following link and we have quoted section 12 below for ease.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents>

Section 12 - Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit.

(1) Section 1(1) does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit.

(2) Subsection (1) does not exempt the public authority from its obligation to comply with paragraph (a) of section 1(1) unless the estimated cost of complying with that paragraph alone would exceed the appropriate limit.





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(3) In subsections (1) and (2) “the appropriate limit” means such amount as may be prescribed, and different amounts may be prescribed in relation to different cases.

(4) The Minister for the Cabinet Office may by regulations provide that, in such circumstances as may be prescribed, where two or more requests for information are made to a public authority:

(a) by one person, or

(b) by different persons who appear to the public authority to be acting in concert or in pursuance of a campaign, the estimated cost of complying with any of the requests is to be taken to be the estimated total cost of complying with all of them.

(5) The Minister for the Cabinet Office may by regulations make provision for the purposes of this section as to the costs to be estimated and as to the manner in which they are to be estimated.

We have considered the current wording of your request and in its current scope we have determined that to establish where all elements of the information is held, to locate the information, retrieving the information and extracting the information would exceed the appropriate limit in terms of timeframes.

Under the terms of the act, we are not obliged to provide any information compiled in the course of our searches prior to concluding section 12 is engaged.

Advice and Assistance

In compliance with the Section 45 Code of Practice (Paragraph 2.10) and to offer advice and assistance under section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, you may wish to consider narrowing the scope of your request.

We can advise that the cost limit is reached as the information in relation to redemption data broken down by whether the property valuation was lower, the same as, or higher than the original purchase price is not collated as part of our engagement with Help to Buy (HTB) customers. Therefore, to collate the information you are seeking we would have to individually review each HTB application that has been redeemed in the past 2 years and then manually confirm each question you have asked in relation to the valuation submitted for that property. Once extracted, collated and reviewed to ensure accuracy, this would exceed 18 hours of staff time.





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You could refine your request to be under the cost limit by requesting information for a smaller time period for the information. However, please note that due to the broad scope of your request we cannot confirm that any further request would not also exceed the section 12 cost limit at this time.

Right to Appeal

If you are not happy with the information that has been provided or the way in which your request has been handled, you may request an internal review. You can request an internal review by writing to Homes England via the details below, quoting the reference number at the top of this letter.

Email: infogov@homesengland.gov.uk

Information Governance Team
Homes England
Windsor House
6th Floor
42-50 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0TL
United Kingdom

Your request for review must be made in writing, explain why you wish to appeal, and be received within 40 working days of the date of this response. Failure to meet this criteria may lead to your request being refused.

Upon receipt, your request for review will be passed to an independent party not involved in your original request. We aim to issue a response within 20 working days.

You may also complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) however, the Information Commissioner does usually expect the internal review procedure to be exhausted in the first instance.

The Information Commissioner's details can be found via the following link:

<https://ico.org.uk/>

6th Floor
Windsor House
42 - 50 Victoria Street, Westminster
London, SW1H 0TL

0300 1234 500
@HomesEngland
www.gov.uk/homes-england





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Please note that the contents of your request and this response are also subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Homes England may be required to disclose your request and our response accordingly.

Yours sincerely,

The Information Governance Team
For Homes England

