

Request 8843 Coronavirus grant schemes

I am writing to you to ask for information under FOI Act 2000 relating to the following coronavirus grant schemes:

- Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSB)
- Additional Restrictions Support Grant (ARG)
- Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) - closed August 2020
- Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grants Fund (RHLGF) - closed August 2020
- Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund (LADGF) - closed August 2020

Please provide the following information for each of the schemes above separately:

1. How much money has been issued from the start of the scheme to date and to how many businesses?
2. How much money has been assessed as obtained fraudulently and how many businesses have been involved?
3. How much of the money identified in the answer to Q2 has been recovered to date?
4. Where fraud was identified how many of those cases have been referred to the authorities to date?
5. How much has been issued in error and to how many businesses? For each please explain what the error was.
6. How much of the money issued in error identified in Q5 has been recovered to date?
7. What policy was in place to ensure that grants were not fraudulently obtained or granted in error to businesses?

Response

1. How much money has been issued from the start of the scheme to date and to how many businesses?

Details of all monies allocated to the various schemes and the payments made by all authorities is publicly available on the [GOV.UK website](#).

Please be aware that the funding from Central Government for grants covered both the small business grant fund and the retail, hospitality and leisure fund, and was not split per type and this applies to the information available above.

2. How much money has been assessed as obtained fraudulently and how many businesses have been involved?

- Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSNG) - 0
- Additional Restrictions Support Grant (ARG) - 0
- Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) - closed August 2020 - 0
- Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grants Fund (RHLGF) - closed August 2020 - 0
- Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund (LADGF) - closed August 2020 - 0

Assumption is that “obtained fraudulently” means both paid and proven as fraud

3. How much of the money identified in the answer to Q2 has been recovered to date?

- Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSNG) - 0
- Additional Restrictions Support Grant (ARG) - 0
- Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) - closed August 2020 - 0
- Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grants Fund (RHLGF) - closed August 2020 - 0
- Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund (LADGF) - closed August 2020 - 0

Assumption is that “obtained fraudulently” means both paid and proven as fraud

4. Where fraud was identified how many of those cases have been referred to the authorities to date?

All proven cases of fraud are referred to NAFN and NATIS. In addition, we refer potential fraud to NAFN, plus NATIS where this involves serious organised crime or cross border fraud. We have also reported 2 cases of proven attempted fraud which have been prevented.

5. How much has been issued in error and to how many businesses? For each please explain what the error was.

- Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSNG) - 0

- Additional Restrictions Support Grant (ARG) - 0
- Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) - closed August 2020 - £25,000 (wrong information supplied by claimant)
- Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grants Fund (RHLGF) - closed August 2020 - £50,000 (wrong information supplied by claimant)
- Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund (LADGF) - closed August 2020 - £7,500 (wrong information supplied by claimant)

6. How much of the money issued in error identified in Q5 has been recovered to date?

- Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSB) - 0
- Additional Restrictions Support Grant (ARG) - 0
- Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) - closed August 2020 - £25,000
- Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grants Fund (RHLGF) - closed August 2020 - £35,000 (payment plan in progress **to recover the rest**)
- Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund (LADGF) - closed August 2020 - £1,500 (payment plan in progress **to recover the rest**)

7. What policy was in place to ensure that grants were not fraudulently obtained or granted in error to businesses?

The Council has published on its website all versions of its policies for each grant scheme. These included a Fair Processing Notice and a counter fraud statement, advising that the Council will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud. Any applicant found to have falsified records to gain grant money will face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to claw back, as may any grants paid in error. The Government's grants management and counter fraud functions have made their digital assurance tool (Spotlight) available to local authorities to support the application process. In addition to the pre-payment eligibility checks, the Council make use of Government schemes, such as the National Fraud Initiative, to take reasonable steps to prevent fraud and error.

The anti-fraud approach is also highlighted prominently on the Council's grant application forms. This includes the declaration at the end of the form.