

FOI DOF/2024-0235

**Request and response**

I am writing to make a formal request (under the Freedom of Information Act if info is not readily available) for the most up-to-date and comprehensive data on student housing rental prices in the following areas of Belfast: Botanic, Stranmillis, Lisburn Road, The Holylands, and Ormeau. I understand there may be no way to determine if a property is inhabited by students and therefore please just include all rental properties within the aforementioned areas.

I would like to request all recorded information you have on rental housing within these areas, including but not limited to the following details for each property:

- Address
- Post Code
- Area
- Rent
- Square Footage of Property
- Square Footage of Individual Rooms
- Number of Bedrooms
- Number of Bathrooms
- Number of Reception Rooms
- Current Energy Rating (EPC)
- Potential EPC
- Type of Heating
- Lease Length
- Furnished Status
- Double Glazing
- HMO Registration Status
- Property Style
- Any Extras

**DoF Response**

LPS does not hold any domestic property rental price information including for student housing.

Some general valuation information for all properties is in the public domain at: [Search - ValuationList.Web \(finance-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/search-valuationlist-web) and on the SpatialNI mapping system at: [LPS Domestic Property Valuation \(spatialni.gov.uk\)](https://www.spatialni.gov.uk/lps-domestic-property-valuation).

I can confirm the Department holds some rating information that may be relevant to your request where owners have indicated to LPS they are a landlord renting property. However this information cannot be provided because it relates to domestic or non-domestic properties occupied or owned by individuals, or because it relates to domestic or non-domestic properties occupied or owned by individuals/sole traders as well as companies. The LPS IT database contains ratepayer information which does not distinguish between a business and a sole trader/individual. Therefore, LPS cannot release such detail, as some of the data might disclose information concerning sole traders/individuals.

This information is exempt under Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act because such disclosure would contravene the first principle of the Data Protection Act 2018, which requires that personal data must be processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner. Disclosure would be unfair, because the sole trader would not expect that this information would be made available to others.

Section 40(2) exempts personal information from disclosure if that information relates to someone other than the applicant and if disclosure of that information would contravene one of the data protection principles in the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) (or certain other provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018).

Having considered all the information contained within the Lawfulness, Fairness and Transparency Test (which we are providing as a separate attachment – Annex B), the department has established that, on balance, there is no lawful basis for the disclosure of third-party personal data falling within the scope of the request of which the requester is not the data subject.

The sole trader distinguishment was upheld in the Information Commissioner's Decision Notice FS50257023 of 7 February 2011 (see [Freedom of Information Act 2000 \(Section 50\) \(ico.org.uk\)](#) where the Commissioner found that the exemption at section 40(2) is engaged in relation to information in the database that related to properties owned by individuals in these cases.