



Compensation claims against local authorities

Harry Fairhead
Policy Analyst, TaxPayers' Alliance
January 2016

This research paper looks at compensation claims made against local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales in 2013-14 and 2014-15. It gives details of payments made by the authority or its insurers (including outstanding estimates) as well as details of the claim. Where the authority has paid out or made an excess payment there is a direct cost to taxpayers. Where the insurer has paid out this will be reflected in higher premiums for the authority and greater cost to the taxpayer.

The key findings of this research are:

- Over £104 million was paid out in compensation in 2013-14 and 2014-15.
- There were more than 40,000 compensation claims paid out in 2013-14 and 2014-15.
- Claim details and payments are available for all local authorities.

[Full data tables can be downloaded by clicking here](#)

- The London Borough with the most paid out was **Lambeth** with **£5,264,071**
- The Scottish Council with the most paid out was **City of Glasgow** with **£2,735,960**
- The Metropolitan district with the most paid out was **Manchester City Council** with **£5,119,419**
- The Non-metropolitan district with the most paid out was **Basildon District Council** with **£1,588,443**
- The Unitary council with the most paid out was **Luton Borough Council** with **£1,910,260**
- The Welsh Council with the greatest total claims (including outstanding estimates) was **Vale of Glamorgan** with **£1,120,528**
- The County Council with the most paid out was **Norfolk County Council** with **£3,474,123**

Financial support for this research paper was provided by the Politics and Economics Research Trust (charity number 1121849). Any views expressed in this paper are those of the author and not those of the research trust or of its trustees.

Examples of compensation claims paid out include:

- Employee detained against own will – Wirral Metropolitan Council - **£5,000** – 2013-14
- Hit in Face – Calderdale - **£2,500** – 2013-14
- Mis-placed reading glasses – Calderdale - **£65** – 2013-14
- Walked into open window – Birmingham City Council - **£2,360** – 2013-14
- Slipped due to sand on astro-turf – Birmingham City Council - **£275** – 2013-14
- Claimant was riding his bicycle on the footpath and his face came into contact with stinging nettles – Newport Council - **£375** – 2014-15
- Window smashed by flying section of tree branch fired from tree cutting machine – Barnsley - **£105** – 2013-14
- CLAIMANT CAUGHT XXXX FOOT IN A POTHOLE BUT MANAGED TO REGAIN XXXX BALANCE SO XXXX DID NOT FALL BUT SUSTAINED INJURIES - Cheshire West and Chester - **£3,750** – 2013-14
- Manual handling – Norfolk County Council - **£1,475, 000** – 2014-15
- Claimant splashed in face with hot tar – Nottinghamshire County Council – **£1,000** – 2014-15
- Horseplay (HP00) – Wiltshire Council – **£393** – 2013-14

[Full data tables can be downloaded by clicking here](#)

Sources, methodology and notes

- All information was acquired via freedom of information requests.
- The payment details may include outstanding estimates.
- Some councils did not provide details of each claim but grouped the total payments together and indicated how many claims had been made. Where this is the case the number of payments has been noted in the penultimate column.
- Some councils did not break down the claims by year so all payments will have been put in a single year and a note will have been added to indicate as such.
- Some councils provided the data in a format which meant it could not be included in the spreadsheet. These are detailed in the notes column and are available on request.
- Some councils responded to the FOI request too late for the information to be included. These are detailed in the notes column and are available on request.
- The vast majority of information has been copied and pasted into the spreadsheets but on occasion where the format did not allow this it was manually transferred. Spelling errors (e.g. 'stationery' rather than 'stationary') are therefore most likely to be transferred from the original response into the spreadsheet.

Table Guide

- Table 1: Compensation paid out by region
- Table 2: Most compensation paid out in 2013-14 and 2014-15 by type of council
- Table 3: Compensation paid out by subject

Table 1: Compensation paid out by region

Region	Total
East Midlands	5,847,836
East of England	12,259,344
London	16,916,994
North East	5,033,303
North West	21,906,616
Scotland	9,826,470
South East	10,472,287
South West	3,876,565
Wales	5,398,860
West Midlands	6,835,269
Yorkshire and Humber	5,996,529

Table 2: Most compensation paid out in 2013-14 and 2014-15 by type of council

Type of Local Authority	Total	Local Authority
Scottish Council	2,735,960	City of Glasgow
Non-metropolitan district	1,588,443	Basildon District Council
London Borough	5,264,071	London Borough of Lambeth
Metropolitan District	5,119,419	Manchester City Council
Unitary	1,910,260	Luton Borough Council
Welsh Council	1,120,528	Vale of Glamorgan*
County	3,474,123	Norfolk County Council

* Including outstanding estimates

Table 3: Compensation paid out by subject

Contains the word/s	2013-14 (£)	2014-15 (£)	Total (£)
Pothole, Pot-hole, Pot hole	5,318,671	2,546,478	7,865,150
Vehicle damage	866,128	1,506,276	2,372,404
Tree	3,235,148	1,993,898	5,229,046
Fall, Fell	7,359,154	4,217,112	11,576,265
Abuse	658,100	156,183	814,283
Mower	19,818	12,768	32,586
Motor	2,076,876	2,660,951	4,737,828
Injury	8,756,952	5,764,284	14,521,236
Chip	147,125	49,237	196,362
Stress	145,822	31,572	177,394
CO poison	16,100	-	16,100
Trip	11,292,890	6,673,437	17,966,327
Goodwill	556	801	1,357
Error	251,481	152,244	403,725
Stationery	24,780	9,679	34,459
Stationary	89,338	68,838	158,176

N.B. these categories may overlap each other and may not reflect the grand total due to the variation of reporting. E.g. 'Pothole' and 'Carriageway Surface Defect' are likely to be the same thing but cannot be grouped with absolute certainty so have not been.