

Public Interest Test Decision Notice



FOI Reference:	FOI-2223-051272
Subject of Request:	Public Health Funerals
Exemption(s) applied:	Section 31 – Law Enforcement

Reason exemption applies:

Disclosure of the “last known address” and the “Date of Birth” of a deceased individual with no known relatives may leave the assets of that person vulnerable to criminal offences.

By disclosing the “last known address”, there is an increased risk of; Criminal damage to the property, theft of property(including “Property Stripping”), exploitation of other vulnerable persons at the address and also squatting within the property. Squatting could lead to further offences such as criminal damage to the property, and can be linked with illicit drugs offences.

The disclosure of the “Date of Birth” may lead to the commission of offences, cause loss to the unsecured estates, and also lead to the deceased’s identity being used for fraud.

The exemption is qualified, which means that even though an exemption applies to the information requested, we are obliged to consider whether its release would nevertheless be in the public interest.

The public interest test has been applied, as follows:

Factors considered in favour of disclosure:

Facilitate the transparency of public authorities for the process with regard to the process of administering public funerals

Release of the information may give members of the public an insight into the Council’s processes in this matter. The Council is committed to improving transparency, and the disclosure of this information may enable the Council’s work to be more transparent to the general public.

Interest to certain members of the public who may have an entitlement to the estate

Release of this information may enable those individuals to exercise that entitlement.

Factors considered in favour of withholding the information:

Protecting the public purse from criminal activities in terms of financial impact

Identity fraud is a burden on the economy, and withholding this information will reduce the likelihood of this fraud taking place, therefore lessening the financial impact.

Protecting the availability of public resources

Withholding this information will reduce the likelihood of fraud and criminal activities occurring, therefore releasing public resources (such as the police) that would otherwise be dedicated to the detection and prevention of such activity.

Some of the information will be made available to the public at a later date when the risk of fraudulent activity is reduced

Once the information is passed to the Government Legal Department, it is made available as part of the published list of unclaimed estates: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/unclaimed-estates-list>

The circumstances under which the public authority obtained the information

The information requested is of a sensitive nature, and the Council considers there to be an expectation that a degree of confidence will attach to the information requested.

Public Interest Test Decision

Section 31	<input type="checkbox"/>	To disclose the requested information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not to disclose the requested information
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Reason for decisions

Whilst the Council accepts there is an interest in this information being available to certain members of the public, the interest is limited.

There is also a greater interest from a wider proportion of the public in ensuring that we do not provide information that could lead to further criminal activity taking place and putting a greater resource burden on either the local authority or police services.

Date: 02/12/2022