



Rutland County Council

Rutland County Council
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23 June 2017

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST – 770/17

Dear Sir/Madam

Your request for information has now been considered and the information requested is provided below.

Request:

Please respond to the following questions under the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

1. Has the authority at any time used a genealogist, probate researcher or tracing agent to locate the next of kin of a deceased person for whom the authority is to undertake, or has undertaken, a public health funeral?
2. Has the local authority used a genealogical researcher or similar organisation to trace owners or relatives where a property in their designated area has been left empty?
3. Has the Deputyship/appointeeship team at the council ever used a genealogical researcher or similar organisation to trace relatives of a person for whom they are acting as deputy?

If the answer to any of the questions above is YES, please respond to the following questions:

4. Which researcher(s) are used?
5. What statutory function(s) is the authority fulfilling when it engages genealogical research organisations?
6. What is the benefit to the authority of entering into each arrangement?
7. In relation to public health funerals, why does the authority not simply refer all deaths of people who die intestate with no identified next of kin and assets of over £500 to the Government Legal Department Bona Vacantia Division for advertisement of the unclaimed estate?
8. What due diligence process was used and against which criteria was the organisation selected in preference to any other research organisation?
9. Why does the council not pass the information to more than one researcher at a time?



10. Has the authority considered the financial implications for the relatives, in that research organisations engaged by the local authority are likely to derive a commercial benefit from the location of next of kin?

11. Does the council expend any monies in tracing next of kin of people who die intestate with no next of kin? If so, how much have they paid the researcher in total for the duration of the contract so far?

12. If the council pays the researcher directly, what specifically do these fees cover? Please provide a breakdown of the costs and services provided.

13. If not paid by the council, how exactly does the genealogical organisation locating next of kin for the council when a person dies intestate with no known relatives get paid for the service they provide?

14. In respect of deaths in the community/public health funerals, in total, on how many occasions has the council used a genealogical researcher to trace next of kin?

15. Of these, on how many occasions did the next of kin take over the funeral arrangements?

16. In the SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES where there have been NO ASSETS in the estate to fund the funeral of the deceased, AND the genealogical organisation was used to trace next of kin, on how many occasions have these relatives:

- a) taken over and paid for the funeral arrangements; or
- b) repaid/reimbursed the local authority for the funeral costs incurred from their own pocket?

17. In the SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES where there were insufficient assets in the estate to refund the cost of the funeral to the council and next of kin identified by the heir hunter have made a contribution from their own personal funds towards the funeral costs, how much money has been contributed:

- a) in each particular case; and
- b) as a running total?

18. Arrangements between the authority and the research organisation will form a contract, even if not formalised. Please provide a copy of any contract(s) between the local authority and any research organisation used to trace next of kin for any reason.

19. Please provide full copies of the exchange of emails between the authority and genealogical organisations for all periods during which referrals were made.

20. In relation to public health funerals, please provide the name, date of death and date of birth of any deceased persons for whom a genealogical organisation was used to trace relatives, from the first recorded referral to the most recent.

21. Does the council have a Death in the Community Procedure or similar written procedure relating to the process that is followed when an individual who dies in the designated local area is referred to the council? If so, please provide a copy.

22. Does the authority employ or contract a house clearance organisation as part of the process of dealing with a death in the community? If so, which one?

23. Does the council require the clearance organisation to sign a confidentiality agreement?

Response:

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 this message acts as a Refusal Notice.

The Council is relying on Section 14 (2) of the Act as it has decided that your request is repeated; the Council has already complied with this request under FOI Request 345/17 therefore the Council is not required to comply with this request:

<https://www.rutland.gov.uk/my-council/transparency/freedom-of-information/>

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If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request please contact the Head of Corporate Governance, Rutland County Council, Catmose, Oakham, Rutland LE15 6HP
You can also complain to the Information Commissioner at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House, Water lane
Wilmslow, Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545700

Yours faithfully

FOI Administrator
Corporate Support Team, Rutland County Council