



Response to Request for Information

Reference FOI 0315119
Date 24 March 2015

Deceased Persons

Request:

1. From February 2015 to any pending please provide details of any deceased persons you have dealt with who have no known next of kin (or you cannot find next of kin).
2. Date of Death and Date of Birth.
3. Last known address.
4. The date passed onto TSOL or The Duchy Solicitor (plus any pending).
5. The Value of estate if known (approximately).
6. Please email your response.

Response:

I regret to inform you that the information you requested is being withheld as the Council considers that Section 31 of the Freedom of Information Act (Law Enforcement) is applicable in this case, for the reasons outlined below.

In cases of intestacy referred to the Treasury Solicitor, the normal practice is for the Treasury Solicitor to establish the value of the estate and whether it is bona vacantia (ownerless goods). To do this they will take steps to secure the estate (for example, by freezing bank accounts) and make enquiries as to the location of title deeds to property and the possible existence of a will. To disclose information that would reveal details of the assets of an estate before such steps have been taken would provide an opportunity for criminal acts such as theft or fraud to be committed.

Given the sensitivity of the information requested and the risk that its disclosure could possibly aid criminal activities, I consider that it would not be in the public interest to release this information.

The Treasury Solicitor may be able to release to you information about persons who have died intestate and their estates, if the estate's assets have been secured. You may wish to contact them at:

Freedom of Information Officer
Treasury Solicitor Department
1 Kemble Street
London
WC2B 4TS
foi@tsol.gsi.gov.uk

You might also find it helpful to visit their website at: www.bonavacantia.gov.uk

Section 31- Law Enforcement

Section 31 is concerned with protecting a wide range of law enforcement interests and its application turns on whether disclosure would be likely to prejudice those interests.

Some interests that are protected by section 31 are drawn quite widely, for example: the administration of justice, the prevention or detection of crime and the operation of immigration controls. But section 31 also applies where the exercise by any public authority of certain specified functions would be prejudiced by disclosure. Those functions include: ascertaining whether a person is responsible for improper conduct, determining the cause of an accident and ascertaining a person's fitness to carry on a profession.

If you are not happy with how we handle your request you can ask for an internal review. If you would like to do so, please detail your concerns in writing and send them to:

Information Governance Team
Governance
Wolverhampton City Council
Civic Centre
St Peter's Square
Wolverhampton
WV1 1SH

E-mail: foi@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Under section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, you also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. However, the Information Commissioner is unlikely to consider a complaint from you unless you have first attempted to resolve the matter through our internal review procedure. The Information Commissioner's details are::

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]

The Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

0303 123 1113

<http://ico.org.uk/complaints/getting/complain>