

18 March 2019
Our ref: 5170728

Thank you for your request received on 18 March 2019, for the following information:

Please respond to the following questions under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act'), which relate to the situation and local authority practices outlined above:

- 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? 2. Please indicate the last date on which a researcher was used. 3. If a researcher has been used in the past year, on how many occasions has this occurred?**
- 4. Which company was last used and by which local authority department? 5. Confirm whether the council currently uses or intends to use a researcher in respect of any of the following: a) Public health funeral work b) Empty homes work c) Deputyship or appointeeship work 6. Which researcher(s) are used?**
- 7. Does the local authority have any contract with any researcher? If so, please provide the contract document, redacted as required. 8. In the circumstances where the local authority was aware of the existence of relatives of a deceased person but lacked the resources or expertise to locate them, would the council use a genealogical researcher on an exclusive basis again? 9. Are there plans for the council to undergo a tendering process for a researcher?**
- 10. If the council previously used heir hunters or other tracing services but no longer does so, what are the reasons behind the change in policy? 11. What is the council's policy and process for making a referral to a genealogical researcher? 12. Please identify the measures in the existing policies and procedures for making referrals to a genealogical researcher which: a) protect next of kin from overcharging through a market exposure and b) ensure all entitled relatives are found? 13. Does the local authority publish an online list of public health funerals where there is an intestacy? 14. If the local authority does publish such a list AND also uses a researcher, when is information added to the list? Is information only added to the list AFTER the researcher has exhausted their investigations or is it added at the same time that a referral is made to the researcher? 15. Does the list include names of deceased individuals where a researcher has been used and family have been located who have taken over responsibility for the funeral (bearing in mind that the estate funds the funeral in any event)? 16. Bearing in mind the benefits to the next of kin of maintaining competition, if the local authority is not already doing so does it intend to begin using or tender for a panel of three researchers to whom each case will be referred concurrently? 17. If the local authority is still engaging in exclusive relationships with heir hunters rather than making referrals to the Bona Vacantia Division or to a panel of three and/or maintaining a regularly updated online list, what is the justification for**

this? Please refer to any relevant policies and legislation. 18. Please provide any records of internal decision making or external consultation from the past year which have resulted in the local authority's current stance on the use of genealogical researchers 19. Would the local authority welcome some formal guidance or regulation from the government or another independent body in order to provide clarity on the appropriate course of action for using private sector services which are free to the local authority but which may result in a third party being charged or prejudiced in some way? 20. Would the local authority welcome some formal guidance from the government or another independent body to provide clarity on the appropriate course of action for when a person dies intestate in their area and there is evidence that there are next of kin but the local authority do not have the resources or skills to locate the relatives

We have processed this request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Response

I am writing to inform you that we have searched our records and the information you requested is not held by London Borough of Barnet. There are no records of genealogists being used in this way.

We do regularly publish Public Health Funeral data on our website

<https://open.barnet.gov.uk/topic/health-social-care?q=Public%20https://open.barnet.gov.uk/dataset?tag=Bona%20Vacantia>

If you are dissatisfied with the response in any way, there is a complaints process which can be found at **Annex A**.

Further information

If you are interested in the data that the council holds you may wish to visit Open Barnet, the council's data portal. This brings together all our published datasets and other information of interest on one searchable database for anyone, anywhere to access. <http://open.barnet.gov.uk/>

Advice and Assistance : Direct Marketing

If you are a company that intends to use the names and contact details of council officers (or other officers) provided in this response for direct marketing, you need to be registered with the Information Commissioner to process personal data for this purpose. You must also check that the individual (whom you wish to contact for direct marketing purposes) is not registered with one of the Preference Services to prevent Direct Marketing. If they are you must adhere to this preference.

You must also ensure you comply with the Privacy Electronic and Communications Regulations (PECR). For more information follow this Link www.ico.org.uk

For the avoidance of doubt the provision of council (and other) officer names and contact details under FOI does not give consent to receive direct marketing via any media and expressly does not constitute a 'soft opt-in' under PECR.

Your rights

If you are unhappy with the way your request for information has been handled, you can request a review within the next 40 working days by writing to the Information Management Team at: foi@barnet.gov.uk. Or by post to Information Management Team (FOI) The London Borough of Barnet, North London Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, London, N11 1NP

If, having exhausted our review procedure, you remain dissatisfied with the handling of your request or complaint, you will have a right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF (telephone: 0303 123 1113; website www.ico.org.uk). There is no charge for making an appeal.

Annex A – Making an appeal

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which your information request has been dealt with you can request an internal review by emailing the Council's Data Protection Officer email: data.protection@barnet.gov.uk (Please quote the reference number above) or by writing to:

The Data Protection Officer

Information Management Team

London Borough of Barnet

North London Business Park

Oakleigh Road South

London N11 1NP

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the review you have a further right of appeal to the Information Commissioner, who regulates the implementation of the Data Protection Act 2018. The Commissioner can be contacted at the following address:

Information Commissioner's Office

Wycliffe House Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire

SK9 5AF

website at www.ico.gov.uk.

Email: casework@ico.org.uk

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Textphone: 01625 545860

Monday to Friday, 9am to 4:30pm

You can also chat online with an advisor.

There is no charge for making an appeal.