



Assurance Group
London Borough of Barnet,
2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale,
London NW9 4EW
19 May 2020
Our ref: 6257188

Thank you for your request received on 20 April 2020, for the following information:

Barnet has a relatively elderly population and has had a relatively large incidence of COVID-19 cases thus far. Part of the public health, economic and government response to the pandemic relies on analysis ONS data based on registered deaths. In recent years the ONS has reported an increase in the time taken to register deaths and some local authorities are taking longer than 5 days more frequently. There would appear to be a risk that the pandemic response is ill-informed or delayed because of a failure to pick up significant numbers of unregistered deaths.

It is therefore of public interest to understand how quickly Barnet is managing to register deaths during the pandemic in order to understand whether there is a significant and/or rising backlog of unregistered deaths. It is also of public interest to know if there has been many more deaths than those which have so far been registered since it may be necessary to escalate the public health response to avoid further deaths.

Please provide the following information for each working day for the registry over the past 120 days (counting back from the date at which the response to this request is drafted):

- 1. number of outstanding deaths notified to the council but yet to be registered**
- 2. number of outstanding deaths notified to the council for which a death certificate has not yet been completed, printed and sent to a next of kin / executor (if it is the case that printing death certificates occurs independently of their registration)**
- 3. a breakdown showing the number of days since notification of all outstanding unregistered deaths**

In the event this information is not available on the requested daily basis over the last 90 days please provide it with as much granularity as possible, eg weekly. It is expected that this information is available as part of the council's normal service performance monitoring and also because, as mentioned above, the ONS monitors delays in registering deaths.

In the event that any of the above information is not available in exactly this form please provide as near as possible the statistical data for the same time period showing performance monitoring data regarding the backlog / outstanding death certification and registration process.

In the event of any questions regarding this request please contact the requester as soon as reasonably practicable and do not wait until the end of the statutory response period.

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

Response

We regret that part of the request is not held and the remainder would exceed the appropriate limit.

1. number of outstanding deaths notified to the council but yet to be registered

The council do not receive a notification of a death, like we would a birth. Therefore , it would not be possible to provide a figure.

2. number of outstanding deaths notified to the council for which a death certificate has not yet been completed, printed and sent to a next of kin / executor (if it is the case that printing death certificates occurs independently of their registration.

We are refusing your request under section 12 because we estimate that compliance with your request will exceed the "appropriate limit" under section 12. The appropriate limit is £450 which is equivalent to 18 hours at £25 per hour. The per hour figure is set by Regulations rather than actual salary paid to any officers handling requests. The appropriate limit includes the time it will take the council to discover if it holds the information requested, to locate it, extract it and collate it as well as putting it into any particular format requested by the requester.

We have calculated that it will take approx 30 hours to comply with your request. Our calculation is as follows: In order to locate and extract the requested information you have set out, it would require checking each death registration entry and cross referencing this with the record of issue for each certificate. For illustrative purposes, based on 12 death registrations a day, 5 days a week, for 6 weeks this would be 360 entries. Based on an average of 5 minutes per entry to check this against the record of issue, complying with the request would take 30 hours which exceeds the appropriate limit.

3. a breakdown showing the number of days since notification of all outstanding unregistered deaths

We do not receive a notification of death, and as such would not be able to supply the data required.

Advice and Assistance

It is hoped that the response above may assist. I am afraid that response to FOI requests will almost certainly be slower than usual at the moment or unavoidably delayed.

As a local authority our first priority is the public and to maintain our service to them, as such our workforce must be prepared to be as flexible as possible meaning some areas may be diverted away from certain tasks to temporarily work outside normal roles and responsibilities during this extraordinary period. Our actions are in line with the advice issued by the Information Commissioners Office.

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) London Borough of Barnet, 2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, NW9 4EW

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.