

8 February 2021
Our ref: 6993204

Thank you for your request received on 4 February 2021, for the following information:

1. How many public health funerals were carried out by the council in the financial years 2020/21 (up to and including all of January 2021), 2019/20 and 2018/19? Please could you break this figure down year-by-year.
2. How much has the council spent on public health funerals it has carried out in the financial years 2020/21 (up to and including all of January 2021), 2019/20 and 2018/19? Please could you break this figure down year-by-year.
3. If possible, for those public health funerals carried out by the council in the financial years 2020/21 (up to and including all of January 2021) and 2019/20 please could the council state how many of those deceased individuals had Covid-19/coronavirus mentioned on their death certificate as one of the causes. Please could you break this figure down year-by-year.
4. Does the council allow family members or friends to attend public health funerals? If not, why?
5. In cases where the deceased person's body is cremated for a public health funeral, does the council return ashes to the family or friends? If not, why not? Does the council charge to return ashes to family or friends of the deceased where a public health funeral has taken place? If so, how much is charged and why?
6. If possible, please can you provide figures disclosing whether the deceased person who was given a public health funeral was cremated or buried? If the latter, please could you disclose whether they had their own grave or if they were buried in a shared grave.

I would be grateful if you could break down these figures year-by-year for the financial years 2020/21 (up to and including all of January 2021), 2019/20 and 2018/19.

Please note, for the purposes of this request, a public health funeral is one provided by a local authority 'for people who have passed away and have no next of kin, or whose next of kin, relatives or friends are unable or unwilling to make the necessary arrangements for a funeral'. Under the Public Health Act (control of disease), local authorities have a statutory duty to arrange a burial or cremation 'where no suitable alternative arrangements are being made'.

See here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-health-funerals-good-practice-guidance/public-health-funerals-good-practice-guidance>

In Scotland, there is a similar requirement under the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016.

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

Response

I can confirm that London Borough of Barnet holds the information you requested.

However, we believe that the exemptions detailed below apply to some/all the information you requested and so we are withholding that information. Please see the Refusal Notice below.

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4. Does the council allow family members or friends to attend public health funerals? If not, why?

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The data for previous years can be sourced via Open-Barnet.gov.uk

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We consider that the absolute exemption set out in Section 21 (Information accessible by other means) applies to the information requested because the information requested is already reasonably accessible elsewhere.

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.