**Freedom of Information Act Request**

Reference: ECC19112526 09 25
Response: 29 September 2025

**I am writing to make a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. My request particularly relates to Adult Social Services / Public Health who deal with the funerals and or estates of individuals who have died within the local authority with no known next of kin.**

**I would be grateful if you could provide the following information:**

1. **Does your local authority use a professional genealogy or heir tracing service to locate next of kin in any of the following circumstances:**
* **Where an individual has died intestate or with no known next of kin;**
* **Where the local authority has arranged a public health funeral under its statutory duties?**
1. **If so, please could you provide the name(s) of the genealogy firm(s) or individual genealogist(s) your authority has used for this purpose in the past five years?**
2. **If your authority maintains a list or panel of approved genealogists or firms for such services, I would also like to request information on how my firm can apply to be considered for inclusion on that list.**
3. **If you do not work with genealogist, can you confirm that should you be unable to locate next of kin, you then refer details straight to the treasury solicitor without the involvement of any professional genealogist?**

I can confirm that Essex County Council does hold information falling within the scope of the above requests.

**Summary of Response**

In summary, the Council is refusing this request because its scope is too large (this is explained formally below).  Advice is set out below about how you may want to submit a new, more targeted request.

Why the request is being refused

Your request has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit.  Regulation 3 of the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limits and Fees) Regulations 2004 (the Regulations) states that the Council is not required to respond to a request if it would cost more than £450 to respond to, costed at £25 per hour as per regulation 4 (which equates to 18 hours).

The information you have requested is spread across several different teams within the Council. The Council does not store the information you have requested in a format which is searchable or extractable electronically, meaning that data extraction would have to be manual.

The estimated time it would take Officers to carry out a search for the information requested is 10 minutes per individual case.  Whilst this may not seem excessive, due to the number of cases which are potentially in scope of the request, Officers would be required to search over 1,000 individual records. This places the Council’s estimate for the time it would take to comply with the request at over 200 hours, which charged at £25 per hour places complying with the request at over the £450 listed in the Regulations. In making this assessment, we have considered the time which we consider it would take to locate, retrieve and extract the requested information.

**Advice and Assistance**

In order to reduce the cost of complying with your request you could consider reducing the scope of the request so that you only request, for example, information from a specific team in this period, for example:

Restrict your request to information held by the Deputyship team for the time period in question.

You could also consider reducing the scope of the request so that you only request the information for a shorter timeframe, for example:

Restrict your request to information held by the Council between 01/08/2020 and 08/08/2020.

Please note that under section 12 (4), if you were to make several different requests for the same information for multiple weeks or from multiple teams the Council may be entitled to aggregate the estimated cost of complying with those requests.

Please contact us using the details below if you would like further advice or assistance.

**Your Right to Know**

Democracy and Transparency

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