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We are frequently asked for information about public health funerals, people who have died with no known next of kin, bona vacantia estates and estates which have been referred to the Treasury Solicitor, or Duchy of Lancaster or Cornwall.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the council is not required to provide information that is already reasonably accessible. Information on deaths without next of kin and/or public health funerals are available from the [Treasury Solicitor's Department Bona Vacantia Division \(http://www.bonavacantia.gov.uk/\)](http://www.bonavacantia.gov.uk/).

In addition to this, the information you requested with regard to the date of birth and last known address are on the death certificate. This information is accessible from the [General Register Office \(http://www.gro.gov.uk/\)](http://www.gro.gov.uk/).

Under Section 31(1)(a) of the Act, an exemption applies where disclosure would be likely to prejudice a range of investigations and conduct, including the prevention and detection of crime. Disclosure of information on the assets of estates of deceased individuals, before steps had been taken by the Treasury Solicitor to secure the assets, could interfere with the statutory function to collect bona vacantia (ownerless goods) vested in the Crown and would provide an opportunity for criminal acts to be committed. Therefore it is not considered to be in the public interest to release this information for the reasons stated above.

This is in line with recent decision notices issued by the Information Commissioner's Office; namely FS50584670 Birmingham Council and FS50586033 Barnsley Metropolitan District Council.

Under Section 41 of the Act - information provided in confidence. The council has a duty of confidence, not only to the deceased but also to any surviving relatives who may not yet have been traced. The disclosure of the information would constitute an actionable breach of confidence.

Under Section 43 of the Act - commercial interests: that disclosure of the information may prejudice the commercial interests of another person as the information could provide the recipient with an unfair advantage.

For Section 31 and Section 43 above (qualified exemptions), and following legal advice received from the Treasury Solicitor, it is not considered to be in the public interest to release this information for the reasons stated above.