

Freedom of Information request 126-18

Request

1. Please tell me, by hospital, how many unclaimed bodies you currently have in your morgues/mortuaries.
2. In each instance, please tell me the length of time the body has been stored there, the gender and age, and if possible, the reason for why it has not yet been claimed.
3. In addition please provide me with the board's policy regarding unclaimed bodies i.e. how long you keep them for, what's done with them if there is a maximum limit on keeping them in the morgue/mortuary.
4. If the board buries or cremates the bodies after a set period, what is the current cost to the board for (a) a cremation and (b) a burial?

Response

1. NHS Borders currently has one unclaimed body in our mortuary.
2. This body has not been claimed due to no next of kin and therefore the procurator fiscal has began the investigation process.

Please note that as NHS Borders is such a small Board the numbers are very small, and to provide further details of these could allow individuals to be identified and we would be in breach of the Data Protection Act 1998. We are therefore withholding all other data under Section 38(2)(ii) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. This is also in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics any number that is less than five, actual numbers and potentially identifiable information is withheld to help maintain patient confidentiality due to potential risk of disclosure. Further information is available in the ISD Statistical Disclosure Control Protocol.

3. NHS Borders does not hold a policy regarding unclaimed bodies, we follow Procurator Fiscal guidelines, therefore under Section 17 of the FOI(S)A 2002 this data is not held.

Under Section 15 Duty to provide advice and assistance please find below the process followed if a person has no next of kin:

- Board will check all details to ensure there is no record of next of kin.
 - Procurator Fiscal is contacted and provided all necessary information to investigate further.
 - Board will register the death when advised by Procurator Fiscal.
 - Procurator Fiscal will advise board to contact Local Authority when their investigation is complete.
 - Local Authority will contact funeral directors to collect.
4. There is no cost to the board, the Local Authority (Environmental Health Department) will liaise with the Procurator Fiscal to arrange burial/cremation of unclaimed bodies.

If you are not satisfied with the way your request has been handled or the decision given, you may ask NHS Borders to review its actions and the decision. If you would like to request a review please apply in writing to, Freedom of Information Review, NHS Borders, Room 2EC3, Education Centre, Borders General Hospital, Melrose, TD6 9BS or foi.enquiries@borders.scot.nhs.uk.

The request for a review should include your name and address for correspondence, the request for information to which the request relates and the issue which you wish to be reviewed. Please state the reference number **126-18** on this request. Your request should be made within 40 working days from receipt of this letter.

If following this review, you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, you may appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner and request an investigation of your complaint. Your request to the Scottish Information Commissioner should be in writing (or other permanent form), stating your name and an address for correspondence. You should provide the details of the request and your reasons for dissatisfaction with both the original response by NHS Borders and your reasons for dissatisfaction with the outcome of the internal review. Your application for an investigation by the Scottish Information Commissioner must be made within six months of your receipt of the response with which you are dissatisfied. The address for the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner is, Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, Fife.