

Post-Mortem Examinations – Release of Body

Reference Number: RDF1547-23

Date of Response: 06/06/2023

Further to your Freedom of Information Act request, please find the Trust's response(s) below:

Please be aware that the Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (Royal Devon) has existed since 1st April 2022 following the integration of the Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust (known as Northern Services) and the Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust (known as Eastern Services).

Dear Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust,

I recently submitted an FOI request regarding the number of days between time of death and release of a body in your trust when a post-mortem examination was necessary. (response attached)

The data shows that from 2019 to 2022, the average number of days has increased from 12 to 18.

Is there a specific reason why it is taking longer to release bodies following a post-mortem examination?

Answer: The delay is most probably due to the following: -

- Organisational change in the Coroners services and workforce shortages which have led to increase in time to request post-mortem and then to release the deceased body afterwards.
- Occasional issues with Pathologist availability and capacity.
- Change in Funeral Director choice. Notably direct cremation companies that are not local to our mortuary, have logistic scheduling that looks to minimise collection journeys. Thus, they only travel to specific areas/mortuaries when this is achieved. This can be over 14 days.