

Our ref: IG/FOI/FOI.361.25

07 July 2025

Sent via email to: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

I write further to your request for information which was received on 11 June 2025, to confirm, in accordance with S.1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, that Powys Teaching Health Board (PTHB) does hold the information that you require.

For ease of reference your request is set out below and my response follows.

Your Freedom of Information (FOI) Request:

We are currently looking at the impact of the rise in numbers of direct cremation in the UK, with particular focus on online direct cremation companies. We are committed to ensuring that open and transparent information about what a direct cremation involves is available to the public, so that they can make informed choices. We also want to explore any potential impact on the emotional health and wellbeing of bereaved people where a relative has chosen a direct cremation rather than a funeral.

We are keen to understand the full picture of the process between death and cremation where an online direct cremation company is used.

It has come to our attention that, in some instances, online direct cremation providers are particularly slow to collect the bodies of deceased patients from hospital mortuaries.

We are concerned that delays in collection of deceased people from hospital mortuaries, and therefore an extended wait until the cremation takes place, can lead to significant additional distress for bereaved people at an already difficult time.

We also understand that such delays in collection inevitably lead to issues with hospital mortuary capacity, which, in turn, has meant that some online direct

cremation providers have accrued significant financial liabilities in unpaid charges for the storage of deceased people in hospital mortuaries.

We are writing to NHS Trusts throughout the UK under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to attempt to ascertain the veracity of this information, and the extent of any impact that it may be having across the country.

We appreciate commercial sensitivity, so we are not asking for individual companies to be identified, however we would like to understand the scale of the problem if it exists, and therefore we would like to ask the following questions:

Q1. In the last five years, has the Trust noted a particular issue with the length of time elapsing before collection of deceased patients by direct cremation companies?

Q2. In the last five years, have delays in collection of deceased patients by direct cremation companies created issues for the Trust with mortuary storage capacity?

Q3. Does the Trust have a policy of charging for deceased patients remaining in the care of the Trust after a certain period of time?

If the answer is yes:

- a. After how many days is this policy implemented?
- b. What is the current daily rate charged?
- c. In the last financial year, what was the total amount charged to direct cremation companies for mortuary storage?
- d. Of this total amount, how much remains unpaid?
- e. Can you advise how the Trust is addressing any such outstanding debts?

We are very grateful for any information that you can supply which will help us build a comprehensive picture of the situation nationwide.

Powys Response:

Q1. I can confirm Powys Teaching Health Board (PTHB) is not aware of any delays brought about by direct cremation companies in the last 5 years.

Q2. The Health Board has not experienced any delays affecting mortuary / body store capacity in the last 5 years.

Q3. I can confirm PTHB does not have a policy of charging for deceased patients remaining in the care of the Trust after a certain period of time.

Q3a – Q3e. Not applicable.

Under the terms of the Health Board's Freedom of Information procedure, individuals seeking access to recorded information held by the Health Board are entitled to request an internal review of the handling of their requests. If you would like to complain about the Health Board's handling of your request, please

contact us directly at the address below or register your complaint via Powys.FOI@wales.nhs.uk

If after Internal Review you remain dissatisfied you are also entitled to refer the matter to the information commissioner at the Information Commissioner's Office (Wales), 2nd Floor, Churchill House, Churchill Way, Cardiff, CF10 2HH. Telephone Number: 0330 414 6421.

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Wayne Tannahill

Associate Director of Capital, Estates and Property

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yng Nghymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb y fath ohebiaeth yng Nghymraeg ac ni fydd hyn yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. We will reply to such correspondence in Welsh and this will not lead to a delay.