



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

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By email

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Our ref: 27/08/nm/1129

25 September 2020

Dear Karl Carpenter,

Re: Documents in deciding how to class a death as an official COVID-19 death

Thank you for your email dated 27 August 2020. In accordance with Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act), I can confirm that Public Health England (PHE) does not hold the information you have specified.

Request

The Office for National Statistics classes deaths of COVID-19 and with COVID-19 as two different things in the monthly mortality analysis.

The official number of COVID-19 deaths is recorded as COVID-19/coronavirus being mentioned anywhere on the death certificate but not necessarily caused by coronavirus. For this reason, the mortality analysis for England does not have as many COVID-19 deaths mentioned as the official number, released by the PM at the start of the lock-down in his daily briefing.

Could you supply any documents, emails or notes that were used to form the decision to class an official COVID-19 death as mentioned on the death certificate and not COVID-19 being the cause of death.

Response

PHE can confirm that it does not hold the information you have specified in your request.

However, under Section 16 of the FOI Act, public authorities have a duty to provide advice and assistance. Accordingly, you may wish to contact the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for further information relating to your request. You can send a request to their official Freedom of Information team through using the following email address: foi.team@ons.gov.uk

Additionally, you may find the following link of use to you, as it holds relevant data on COVID-19 related deaths, co-morbidity, and pre-existing conditions, which can be accessed using the following link:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsinvolvingcovid19englandandwales/deathsoccurringinjune2020#how-many-people-have-died-from-covid-19>

If you have any queries regarding the information that has been supplied to you, please refer your query to in writing in the first instance. If you remain dissatisfied and would like to request an internal review, then please contact us at the address above or by emailing foi@phe.gov.uk.

Please note that you have the right to an independent review by the Information Commissioner's Office if a complaint cannot be resolved through the PHE complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner's Office can be contacted by writing to Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely,

FOI Team