

FOI DOF/2026-0546

Request

I was referred to the you by the Committee for Finance in relation to historic correspondence concerning bereavement services and Tell Us Once in Northern Ireland.

I'm carrying out research into the NI-specific administrative and policy context, linked to the NI Executive's draft AI Strategy and its bereavement / linked citizen services use case.

I would be grateful if you could provide copies of the Department of Finance correspondence or briefing material referred to in the Committee for Finance minutes, particularly:

- the Departmental response considered in December 2024 in relation to bereavement services / Tell Us Once
- any subsequent update considered by the Committee in November 2025
- and any related written briefing on the Tell Us Once service provided to the Committee

I'm particularly interested in historic information relating to departmental responsibilities, data-sharing, legal or operational dependencies, and the structure of bereavement services in Northern Ireland.

I'm not seeking information on any current discussions with DWP. I am looking for the historic Departmental material already referenced in the public Assembly record

Further information provided:

Hopefully these links below will help:

Committee for Finance, Minutes of Proceedings, 4 December 2024

<https://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/2022-2027/finance/minutes-of-proceedings/session-2024---2025/4-december-2024/>

Committee for Finance, Minutes of Proceedings, 11 December 2024

<https://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/2022-2027/finance/minutes-of-proceedings/session-2024---2025/11-december-2024/>

Committee for Finance, Minutes of Proceedings, 12 November 2025

<https://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/2022-2027/finance/minutes-of-proceedings/session-2025---2026/12-november-2025/>

Committee for Finance, Minutes of Proceedings, 3 December 2025

<https://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/2022-2027/finance/minutes-of-proceedings/session-2025---2026/03-december-2025/>

DoF response

I can confirm the department holds the information requested. Please see the attached document at **Annex C**.

Information is also being withheld under Section 40(2) which exempts personal information from disclosure if that information relates to someone other than the applicant, and if disclosure of that information would contravene one of the data protection principles in the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) (or certain other provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018).

In this case, I believe disclosure would contravene the first data protection principle, which provides that personal data must be processed lawfully and fairly. Therefore, having considered all the information contained within the Legitimate Interest Test – lawful, fairness and transparency test (attached as a separate document – **Annex D**), the department has established that, on balance, there is no lawful basis for the disclosure of third-party personal data falling within the scope of the request of which the requester is not the data subject.

Annex B - Internal Reviews

An Internal Review request challenges the response given, based on exemptions applied, the adequacy of the search, and the timeliness of the response. It is not the following which will be treated as specified:

- Questions asking for clarification on information provided: Will be treated as part of original FOI request.
- Additional questions about the information in the response: Will be treated as a new FOI request.
- Questions about the subject not related to the original request: Will be treated as new FOI request.
- Questions regarding how a service operates or why a decision was made: Will be treated as normal business and responded to accordingly.
- Complaints or concerns raised in response to information provided: Will be treated in line with relevant complaints procedure.

What to do

- **Submit a request:** Clearly state that you want an internal review of a previous FOI response and provide the necessary details.
- **Follow the timeline:** Be sure to submit your request within 40 working days of receiving the original response. If the Department has not responded at all, you have 40 working days after the original 20-day response period has passed.
- **Wait for a response:** The review is typically completed within 20 working days but can take up to 40 working days in exceptional circumstances. The Department should inform you of any delays.

What the review includes

- A fresh decision based on a reconsideration of all relevant factors.
- An assessment of whether the request was handled correctly and if exemptions were applied appropriately.
- The review will be conducted by someone who was not involved in the original decision.

If you wish to request an internal review, please email foi@finance-ni.gov.uk or write to FOI/EIR Team, Department of Finance, 2nd Floor, Craigantlet Buildings, Stoney Road, Belfast, BT4 3SX.