

03 February 2025

REFERENCE: FOI\25\1

Dear Madam,

Thank you for your request for information dated 7th January 2025 and detailed below:

Under Freedom of Information legislation in terms of post-mortems carried out in the Northern Ireland Regional Forensic Mortuary, please clarify:

- 1. What is entailed in (a) suspicious/forensic, (b) full; and (c) non / minimally invasive postmortems?*
- 2. What is the process and/or who requests or is responsible for requesting each of the above?*
- 3. Who decides on the eventual type of post-mortem?*

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives you two rights of access when you write to us asking for information. You have the right to know whether we hold recorded information falling in scope of your request, and you have the right to receive this recorded information subject to cost limit or exemption.

Further to the Departments original reply to you dated 13 August 2024 I have answered your questions in the order received

1. (a) A suspicious/forensic post-mortem is a detailed examination of the external surface and internal anatomy of the body. Forensic samples and photographs may also be taken on behalf of the police.

(b) A full post mortem involves an invasive examination of all of the bodies internal cavities.

c) A non/minimally invasive post mortem typically involve radiological imaging of the body, such as using a CT scanner.

2. Coroners are independent judicial officers who investigate deaths reported to them. They will make whatever inquiries are necessary to find out the cause of death, this includes ordering a post mortem examination. The State Pathologist's Department carry out post mortems only at the request of the Coroners Service for Northern Ireland (CSNI).

3. The type of post mortem will be at the discretion of the consultant forensic pathologist in consultation with the Coroner to determine the extent of the examination required in each case.

Further information regarding the coronial process within Northern Ireland can be found at [NI Direct by clicking on this link](#).

If you are unhappy at the way in which your request has been handled, you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner and ask the Commissioner to investigate whether the DOJ has complied with the terms of the FOIA. You can write to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Further details on the role of the Information Commissioner can be found at:
www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

DoJ Records & Information Manager