

Role Of The Coroner And The Coroners Officer

THE CORONER

“The Coroner frequents more public houses than any man alive. The smell of sawdust, beer, tobacco smoke, and sprits is inseparable in his vocation from death in its most awful shapes.”

Charles Dickens, Bleak House Chapter XI

THE CORONER

- Coroners have been around since 1194
- Independent Judicial officers.
- Appointed and funded by Local Authority
- Answerable to the Lord Chancellor via the Chief Coroner.
- General retirement age is 70 but this can be extended.
- Full or part time.
- Lawyers (no longer Doctors)

INVESTIGATE DEATHS

Coroners & Justice Act 2009

Duty of Coroner to investigate deaths which appear to be:-

- Sudden and of unknown cause or
- Unnatural or due to violence or
- Occur in legal custody

INVESTIGATE DEATHS

To answer 4 questions

- Who has died?
- When did they die?
- Where did they die?
- How did they come by their death?

SIGNING THE MCCD

A Doctor can issue a death certificate if the following criteria is met (14 day rule):

- The same doctor has seen the patient in life
- The same doctor has treated that patient with the illness in which they have died from
- If the above are not met, then the case must be reported to the Coroner for further discussion, but this does not always mean a post mortem will have to be undertaken.

INITIAL INVESTIGATIONS

- Post Mortem examinations
 - Coroners, Hospital, Forensic
- Gather statements/Reports
 - NOK, Witnesses, Police, Health & Safety Executive, Air Accident Investigations etc
- Require medical notes
 - Hospital or GP
- Third party agency enquiries
 - Known to substance misuse, Probation, Mental health trusts

INQUESTS

- If cause of death is unknown or
- Death was Unnatural or Violent or
- Occurred in Custody

Then an Inquest is heard

- Sometimes with a Jury.
- Open Court hearing.
- Press can attend.

UNNATURAL DEATHS

- Hangings
- Road Traffic Collision
- Fall from Height
- Drug and alcohol use
- Overdoses
- Drownings
- Shooting
- At work accidents
- Medical errors or treatment/care
- Mesothelioma or asbestos exposure related cancers

CORONER'S COURT

- Not a blame court
- Many Coroners do not have their own Courts.
- Many unsuitable for Juries
- Has to be held in a building open to the public
- Security and other aspects can be a problem

Inquest Conclusions

- Lawful/un-lawful killing
- Suicide
- Accident
- Misadventure
- Industrial disease
- Neglect
- Open conclusion
- Road traffic collision
- Drug / alcohol related
- Short form (narrative) conclusions
- Still birth
- Natural causes

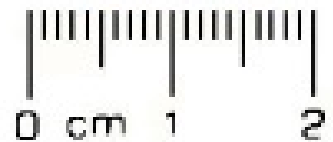
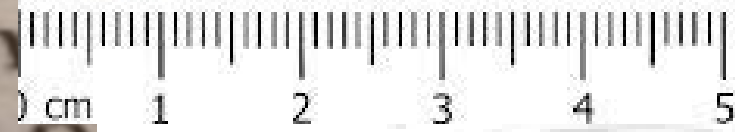
What do Coroners Officers Do?

- Called out to Scenes
- Process referrals and offer advice (Police, Doctors, Hospitals, Hospices, Nursing Homes, Deaths abroad, Funeral Directors)
- Contact Next of Kin (act as liaison throughout Investigation)
- Issue relevant paperwork
- Organise and attend Post Mortems
- Authorise for bodies to be released to funeral directors
- Co-ordinate return or disposal of Property
- Open Investigations (COD unknown or awaiting further results)
- Evidence gathering
- Liaise with third parties to obtain reports (Mental Health teams, Support Groups, Youth Services, Specialist Nurses, Doctors etc)
- Produce Inquest files
- Arrange Inquest venues, dates and witness availability
- Co-ordinate the Inquest

OTHER DUTIES

- Exhumation of bodies
- Deaths Abroad
- Removal of bodies abroad
- Mass fatalities
- Body or body part Identification.
- Treasure

Examples of Treasure





Thank you