



Coroner's Charter

H.M.CORONER

WARWICKSHIRE SERVICE CHARTER

General Application

This Charter tells you what standards of performance are to be expected in the Coroner Service, and what to do if something goes wrong. This Charter relates to the Coroner Service in Warwickshire

The principal duty of coroners is to investigate deaths which are reported to them and which appear to be due to violence, are unnatural, from sudden and of unknown cause or which occur in legal custody.

Conduct

The Warwickshire Coroner and his officers will treat the bereaved and other members of the public courteously and sympathetically at all times, and will have regard, within the constraints of the statutory duties, to the deceased's religious faith and cultural traditions.

Duties will be discharged impartially, with a view to ascertaining the facts surrounding a death for the purpose of the Coroner's statutory responsibilities.

Confidentiality will be preserved as far as possible within a system based on public court hearings. Explanations for the procedures adopted in particular cases will be given, on request, where the Coroner is satisfied that the person has a proper interest.

Court hearings are held at appropriate venues throughout the County. The courts have toilets, telephones and arrangements for the disabled. Those wishing to attend court who have any special requirements (including, for example, translating or interpreting services) are requested to contact the Coroner's office in advance.

Maps giving directions to the location of the court/coroner's office are available on application to the Coroner or his officers.

Coroners and their officers will identify themselves by name in their dealings with members of the public. Deputy Coroners act when the Coroner is not available. In doing so, they exercise the full powers of the Coroner.

Correspondence and feedback

Written enquiries to the Coroner on pending and current cases will normally receive a reply within 10 working days of receipt

The Warwickshire Coroner has offices at Warwick, Stratford upon Avon and Bedworth. Contact details appear on the last page.

Coroners will not normally enter into correspondence about the cases they have completed, but comments and suggestions on improving the coroner service are always welcome. Please contact the coroner's office at the address given. The aim of the Coroner Service is to provide a service of excellence so that you should have no cause for complaint, but if you do, the complaint will be dealt with speedily and courteously.

If an inquest is not required

If a death is reported which does not need to be the subject of an inquest, a certificate giving the cause of death will be sent to the registrar of deaths within 5 working days of the completion of the Coroner's enquiries.

When there is an inquest

Interviews

If the Coroner or his officers need to interview someone about a death, the aim will be to do so no more than once, at a time and place convenient to the person concerned. If the person wishes, they may be accompanied during the interview by a relative, friend or other person. Every effort will be made to avoid causing any additional distress to close friends or relatives of the deceased.

Post mortems

When the Coroner decides that a post mortem is necessary, wherever possible, the immediate next of kin whose details are known will be given:

- An explanation why a post mortem is necessary and what is involved, if requested;
- Advance notice of the arrangements, so that they may be represented (by a doctor) if they wish (but post mortem examinations must normally be undertaken as soon as possible, usually within 24 hours of the discovery of the death);
- Notice may not always be practicable;
- A copy of the post mortem report, if requested, for which a fee is payable

Administrative arrangements

The Coroner will notify those asked to attend an inquest of:

- The date and time of each hearing (if more than one) at least 10 working days in advance, but on occasions an inquest may be arranged at shorter notice at the request of the bereaved family. (Please note that the formal opening of the inquest - for taking evidence of identity and the medical cause of death - will generally take place as soon as possible after the completion of the post mortem, at which point the body will normally be released);
- Details of the location of the court where the inquest will be held and of the facilities which will be available there;
- Details of the telephone number and a named contact for enquiries; and will:
- Provide a leaflet explaining the purpose and procedures of inquests;
- Advise those who express a wish to do so that they may attend an inquest as an observer beforehand;
- Explain to those called as a witness or juror how to claim for travel and subsistence expenses and for financial loss allowances; ascertain any preference for swearing evidence (e.g. in accordance with specified religious beliefs, or on affirmation).

Timing

The Coroner will endeavour to hold any necessary inquest at the earliest possible date. Most inquests in Warwickshire take place within 6 months of the death. However, there may be factors outside the Coroner's control that can cause delay. Where the inquest is likely to be delayed, the Coroner will notify interested persons of the position, including the reasons for any continuing delay, on a regular basis, unless the inquest has been formally adjourned to a specific date.

Release of the body

The Coroner will release the body of the deceased for the funeral at the earliest opportunity. Where there are uncertainties as to the cause of death, or where the death is suspicious, it may be necessary to retain the body longer for further investigation. The Coroner will ensure that relatives are advised of potential delays and the reasons for them.

Disclosure of information

The Coroner will, on request and at his discretion, provide to interested persons copies of the post mortem report, for which payment is likely to be required.

Jurors

For jurors, the Coroner will:

- Send a leaflet explaining the duties of a juror at an inquest, and providing other relevant information, in advance.
- Provide an indication in advance of how long the jury service will last.

After the inquest

On the conclusion of the inquest, the next of kin, if present, will be provided with an explanation about how, where and when a copy of the death certificate may be obtained.

If, in the interests of preventing further fatalities, the Coroner may decide to report the matter to a relevant person or authority.

The Coroner will supply to an interested person, on application, a copy of the inquest verdict (although this is reproduced on the death certificate), or any of the documents produced in evidence, on receipt of the prescribed fee (currently £1.10 per page). An estimate of the fee will be provided in advance if requested.

The Coroner will also supply, for the prescribed fee, a copy of his notes of evidence, but this may take up to 6 weeks to provide. In all cases, an estimate of the fee will be given on application. Alternatively a CD of the inquest can be provided for £25.00.

The Coroner/local authority will pay witness and juror expenses claims promptly and within 10 working days of receipt of properly completed applications.

Applications for permission to remove a body abroad

The Coroner will make every effort to complete his enquiries and decide such applications within 5 days of receipt of notice (including weekends and bank holidays).

Complaints

Complaints about a coroner's decision or the outcome of an inquest can only be dealt with through the High Court. An appeal against a Coroner's verdict may be referred to judicial review, and in this case independent legal advice should be sought.

All complaints about the administration of the Warwickshire Coroner Service, or the conduct of individual coroners or their officers should be raised in the first instance with the Coroner concerned by writing to him or telephoning him at the address below. The Coroner will reply to such complaints in accordance with the timescales set out above and will keep a record of the complaint and any conclusion.

If the Coroner is unable to deal with the complaint satisfactorily, the complainant may refer it to the Ministry of Justice (Coroners Section, Tel: 020 7210 0048, email: judith.bernstein@justice.gsi.gov.uk). The Ministry of Justice has no disciplinary powers or power to award compensation, but may, in appropriate cases, refer the complaint to the Lord Chancellor who is responsible for the discipline of coroners.

Further information

Further copies of this charter may be obtained from the Coroner's office. General information is contained in the Home Office leaflet 'When Sudden Death Occurs' available from the Coroner's office or from police stations, hospitals, libraries and registration offices.

If this information is difficult to understand we can provide it in another format. For example; in braille, large print, on audiotape or by talking to you. If your first language is not English please contact Polly Dickinson, Registration and Coroner's Service Manager, Warwickshire County Council, Tel: 01926 746806, Email: pollydickinson@warwickshire.gov.uk

Contacting the Coroner and Coroners Officers

HM Coroner

Sean McGovern
Coroner's Office
Police Station
Little Park Street
Coventry CV1 2JX

Tel: 02476 539018 / 539019
Fax: 02476 539804

Deputy Coroner

David Clark

Assistant Deputy Coroners

Barbara Borek
Louise Hunt
Tom Leeper
Stephen Mather
John Ryan

Coroner's Officers

Warwick:

Sally Hunt

Nick James

Viv Hughes

The Police Station

Priory Road

Warwick. CV34 4NA

Email:

sally.hunt@warwickshire.pnn.police.uk

nick.james@warwickshire.pnn.police.uk

viv.hughes@warwickshire.pnn.police.uk

Tel: 01926 684348 / 9

01926 684322

Fax: 01926 684326

Stratford:

Upon Avon

Bob Scott

The Police Station

Rother Street

Stratford upon Avon.

CV37 6RD

Email: bob.scott@warwickshire.pnn.police.uk

Tel: 01789 444521

Fax: 01926 444732/444688

Bedworth:

Carole Dulson

Helen Pallett

The Police Station

High Street

Bedworth. CV12 8NH

Email:

carole.dulson@warwickshire.pnn.police.uk

helen.pallett@warwickshire.pnn.police.uk

Tel: 02476 483368

02476 483361

Fax: 02476 483392