



The Coroners' Courts  
Support Service

*Here for you*

Information  
on attending  
an Inquest at  
a Coroner's  
Court



## The Coroners' Courts Support Service

Attending an Inquest can be a bewildering and emotional experience. We hope this leaflet will explain what happens if you are asked to attend an Inquest at a Coroner's Court. Please do contact us for further information or visit our website at: [www.coronerscourtsupportservice.org.uk](http://www.coronerscourtsupportservice.org.uk)

The Coroners' Courts Support Service (CCSS) is a Registered Charity whose trained volunteers give emotional and practical support to bereaved families and other witnesses attending an Inquest. The Service has a policy of confidentiality and Equal Opportunities, to which all our staff and volunteers adhere.

## What happens at a Coroner's Court?

An Inquest is to determine how, when and where someone has died, but not why. It is an investigation to determine the facts concerning a death and does not apportion blame on any individual.

Coroners are independent Judicial Officers responsible for making enquiries into violent or unnatural deaths where the cause is unknown.

A Coroner's Officer is responsible for investigating the cause of death and presenting the evidence in Court on the day of the Inquest.

A Coroner may hold an Inquest with a Jury in certain circumstances. These are usually deaths in prison and in police custody or some other form of state detention; also industrial accidents and deaths which are detrimental to the health and safety of the public.

A Jury comprises of between 7 and 11 members of the public. It is the Coroner's duty to direct the Jury on the law and to sum up the evidence.

## Who may attend an Inquest?

Family and other relatives, friends and witnesses may attend. The Inquest and all proceedings before the Coroner are open to members of the public and the Press and are recorded. The Press may ask the family for a statement or an interview after the Inquest has finished. You do not have to do this unless you wish to do so.

## What will happen when you arrive at Court?

If our service is available, a CCSS volunteer will be there to offer you practical help and emotional support whilst you are at the Court. If possible, the volunteer will take you into the Court before the proceedings start and will explain how an Inquest is conducted, the layout of the Court, where everyone will sit and their roles during the Inquest. For a full list of Courts where the CCSS is available please visit our website at [www.coronerscourtsupportservice.org.uk](http://www.coronerscourtsupportservice.org.uk)

## What happens during the Inquest?

The Coroner will call individual witnesses and will ask them questions relating to the statements that were taken at the time of the death. The Coroner may also ask members of the family to give a little background information on their relative.

After the Coroner has asked each witness any questions, the family will normally also have an opportunity to ask them questions. Sometimes legal representatives attend and may also ask questions on behalf of their clients such as the family or witnesses.

If a witness has not been asked to attend Court in person then their evidence may be read. This is usually known as documentary evidence.

You may leave the Court during the proceedings if you wish to, for example if you become upset. The CCSS volunteer can accompany you.

Although an Inquest does not apportion blame on any individual, the Coroner is, in appropriate cases, able to make recommendations to deal with systemic failings.

## After the Inquest

At the end of the Inquest, the Coroner will give her/ his conclusion, and this will appear on the final Death Certificate. The Coroner's Officer or volunteer will give you details of how to obtain this.

The CCSS also has a list of bereavement organisations and other agencies that you may find helpful. Please ask the volunteer for details.

## Helpline

The CCSS can also offer emotional and practical support through our Helpline. Attending an Inquest can feel quite overwhelming or intimidating if you have never been to one before. Knowing you may be attending can make you feel anxious at a time when you are still trying to grieve.

Our experienced volunteers can advise you about the Inquest process or signpost you to the appropriate person or organisation if you need more specific support.

Please do call us on 0300 111 2141  
or e-mail [helpline@ccss.org.uk](mailto:helpline@ccss.org.uk)  
Please check our website for opening hours.

*Here for you*

The Coroners' Court Support Service is a Registered Charity whose trained volunteers give emotional and practical support to bereaved families and other witnesses attending an Inquest. As a charity we are dependent on donations to deliver the service, and we are always very grateful for any contributions.

Please visit our website to make a donation.  
[www.coronerscourtsupportservice.org.uk](http://www.coronerscourtsupportservice.org.uk)

## How the CCSS Started

In 2002 one of the founding Trustees attended an Inquest into the death of a family member, David Whyte, and was shocked to find there was no support for the families and witnesses who attended. There was only one Coroner's Officer who was far too busy dealing with all of the cases to be able to support anyone attending.

After this traumatic experience the founding Trustees immediately set about developing the CCSS as they were determined to ensure that no other bereaved family had the same experience.

From our start with two volunteers in the Westminster Coroner's Court we continue to extend the Service throughout the country, but we need help to do this.

The CCSS is dedicated to all those who have died in unusual or violent circumstances, especially David Whyte, who was tragically killed in a car accident aged just twenty four.

If you would like further information about the Coroners' Courts Support Service please email us at: [info@ccsupport.org.uk](mailto:info@ccsupport.org.uk)



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Service is available

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