

What is an inquest ?

What is an inquest and why have one?

An inquest is held to establish the details of a person's death, specifically, who, where, when and how. An inquest does not consider fault or blame but it will reach a conclusion or verdict on how the deceased came to their death.

Any person's death that is considered violent, unnatural or unexplained must be reported to the coroner. Examples include deaths where the medical cause of death is unknown, where there may be suspicious circumstances or questions of neglect, where the person died following a medical procedure or whilst in police custody.

Is attendance at an inquest compulsory?

The coroner will notify 'Interested Persons' of the date and venue of the inquest and may invite them to give evidence. If they are unwilling to attend, the coroner can issue a witness summons to compel that person to attend the inquest.

If you have been asked to attend an inquest, you may wish to bring someone with you for moral support. The vast majority of inquests are held in public which means that anyone can attend and observe the proceedings, subject to available space.

What should I do if I am asked to provide a statement to the coroner or to appear as a witness?

If you are asked to provide a statement or report, it is crucial that this is done correctly as this lays the foundation for your involvement in the inquest and once submitted it is very difficult to distance yourself from what you have written. Similarly, if you are asked to appear as a witness, it is important to ensure you are fully prepared beforehand.

It is therefore sensible to contact your indemnity organisation or seek legal advice straight away if you have been asked to participate in an inquest.

How should I address the coroner?

The coroner should be addressed as "Madam", "Ma'am" or "Sir".



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