

## 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 on behalf of the Coroner.

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.

Find us on



@OrgCCSS

[www.coronerscourtsupportservice.org.uk](http://www.coronerscourtsupportservice.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. 1105899

## 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 [www.coronerscourtsupportservice.org.uk](http://www.coronerscourtsupportservice.org.uk)

## What happens during the Inquest?

The Coroner will call individual witnesses and 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 client 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 do so, for example if you become upset. The CCSS volunteer can accompany you.

*Here for you*



## 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 on how to obtain this.

The CCSS has a list of bereavement agencies that you may find helpful, please ask the volunteer for details or visit our website.



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for Voluntary Service  
The Coroners' Courts Support Service  
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*Thank you*



The Coroners' Courts  
Support Service

*Here for you*

Support and Guidance  
for Bereaved People  
Attending Inquests

National  
Helpline 0300 111 2141





### Impact of bereavement

Bereavement and trauma can affect people in different ways and it is not unusual to feel shock, denial, anger, sadness and despair at any time.

You may lose confidence, feel powerless and that the future holds no hope. You may feel isolated and anxious and your physical and mental health may suffer. All these are common reactions. Some people find that attending the Inquest can make them feel like the death was only yesterday and their grief is overwhelming.

There is no 'normal' response to the death of a loved one and nor is there a timeline as to when you might 'recover'.

Sometimes it is just about acceptance of what has happened and getting through one day at a time when all seems too much to bear. You may also have to take on additional responsibilities that are new to you.

### Please Contact our National Helpline for Support

Helpline: 0300 111 2141  
email: [helpline@ccss.org.uk](mailto:helpline@ccss.org.uk)

or visit our website

[www.coronerscourtsupportservice.org.uk](http://www.coronerscourtsupportservice.org.uk)

Our Helpline team will offer emotional support and practical information about the Inquest process.

Please call us Monday to Friday between 09:00 - 19:00 and Saturday between 09:00 - 14:00

Please visit our website to find out in which Coroners' Courts our service is available



### Impact of the Inquest

An Inquest can be a traumatic experience for anyone involved. We understand that a Coroner's Court can be a bewildering place to attend. As a bereaved family member or a witness, it is an event of which you may have little or no understanding or control.

The difficult circumstances that surround a death requiring an Inquest already complicates the grieving process and can often delay it. You may also feel you have been waiting and hoping for something to change once the Inquest is over.

Our aim is to help, guide and support everyone attending an Inquest. The CCSS trained volunteers will support people through the often complicated and confusing process and explain the Inquest procedure to you, helping you have a much better understanding of your role within this often unfamiliar environment. We are also able to support people when they attend a Public Inquiry.

*Here for you*

### Local and National Telephone Support Service

We can't always be at court to meet with you face to face. However, we can always be *Here for you* by being at the end of the phone. Our trained volunteers can guide you through what will happen on the day of the Inquest and will have local knowledge of the area, how the court works and can chat with you on the phone to explain what to expect at the specific court where you will be attending.

Our local telephone support volunteers have honed their skills so that bereaved families, witnesses and others like you can still benefit from the support our volunteers at court can offer. They will guide you through the Inquest process and can offer you emotional support to help you through a very difficult time in your bereavement.

By accessing our local telephone service and receiving our support, people attending an Inquest are often less anxious and are clearer in their role within the Inquest process.

Just call our Helpline number below and we can put you in touch with a local court volunteer with knowledge of how the Inquest works and they can explain what to expect at the court where you will be attending.

Call  
0300 111 2141



### Who we are

The Coroners' Courts Support Service (CCSS) is an independent charity founded in 2003. Trained volunteers offer free, confidential\*, emotional support and practical help to bereaved families, witnesses and others attending an Inquest at some of the Coroners' Courts in England. We can signpost people to other appropriate organisations and prior to the Inquest we can offer support and information via our national Helpline.

\* We have a duty of care and therefore we are obliged to report any concerns if you or someone else may be at risk of harm or for legal reasons.

### Your experience

Any death can have a devastating impact on bereaved people, but when that death is sudden, unexplained or of an unknown cause it can only add to the negative impact on families.

Strangers such as the police, coroner's officer or the pathologist may have to become involved in the death. This can feel like an unwanted intrusion for the family at what should be a very private time.

It is not unusual to feel confused and as if you are losing control. Bereavement is a universal experience, yet it will be unique to each of us and it is natural to feel intense grief after someone dies. Usually people are resilient and manage to cope with difficult experiences but, when someone close to us dies, we can't imagine living without them in our lives and the loss can be a physical pain. Family and friends can often feel helpless when seeing a loved one in so much distress.