

Questions asked ... *about the Coroner*

A brief overview of H M Coroner, what they do and why they
may be involved with a death




THE SEARSON FAMILY
FUNERAL SERVICE

*"We don't just arrange funerals, we create
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Questions asked ...

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WHO IS THE CORONER?

Coroners are independent judicial officers who will enquire into the circumstances of deaths reported to them and make appropriate findings about how the person died. The Coroner is supported by Coroner's Officers who make enquiries and liaise with bereaved families, police, doctors and funeral directors.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE DECEASED?

In many cases, your Funeral Director will be called to collect the deceased, who will then be taken to the Funeral Home. Depending upon the circumstances, the Coroner may contact their Contractor, and the deceased will be taken directly to the nearest Hospital Mortuary. In either situation, you will be notified of the location, either by the Funeral Director, Contractor, Police Officer or Paramedic.

WHEN IS A DEATH REFERRED TO THE CORONER?

- (1) When the death occurred during or following a Medical Procedure in a hospital.
- (2) When the death is a result of Homicide, Suicide, Accident, Industrial Disease or any other death identified as unnatural causes.
- (3) When there are real grounds for believing that neglect contributed to the death.
- (4) When the death has happened in prison, in Police Custody or whilst the deceased was detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act.
- (5) Where the cause of death is not known or there are any other circumstances which justify investigation by the Coroner.

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WHEN CAN I APPOINT A FUNERAL DIRECTOR?

You may appoint a Funeral Director whenever you feel ready. Please advise them that the Coroner's service is involved in the circumstances.

WHAT WILL THE CORONER DO?

The Coroner has a legal obligation to be involved in cases where the circumstances apply, or where a doctor is not able to issue a valid, 'Medical Certificate of Cause of Death'. Once a referral has been made or a police report submitted, the Coroner will commence an investigation into the circumstances of the death. This is likely to include liaison with a Medical Examiner, reviewing medical reports, obtaining witness statements, carrying out identity checks and in some situations asking for a Post-Mortem Examination to be carried out.

In many cases, the Coroner will determine that death was a result of natural causes, and you will not be unduly delayed in registering the death and making funeral arrangements. The Coroners Officer will liaise with you throughout the investigation to keep you updated and explain the likely timescales.

WHEN CAN THE FUNERAL TAKE PLACE?

If an inquest is not needed, a funeral can be arranged straight away, and the Coroner will issue the appropriate paperwork directly to the Registration Office. If, however, an Inquest is necessary, the Coroner will generally release the deceased for the funeral as soon as the Inquest has been opened. The Coroner's Officer will tell you when this will happen and will issue an Interim Death Certificate.

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WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

This will depend on the circumstances and the outcome of the Coroner's investigations. In most cases, the Coroner will authorise the registration of the death following a Post-Mortem Examination or other enquiries. Once authorisation has been given, you will be asked to make an appointment to register the death.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

Typically, you are expected to allow five working days from the time the Coroner is informed until completion of the enquiries, though this may take longer in individual cases. As such, it is recommended that you do not book a day and time of the funeral until the investigation is completed.

WHAT IS AN INQUEST?

In some circumstances, the Coroner is obliged by law to hold an inquest. This will be the case if the death is unnatural, for example: - has arisen from injury, accident, poisoning, industrial disease or where a person has died in custody or appears to have taken their own life. An inquest is a formal court hearing, open to members of the public and the media. If appropriate, witnesses will be called, and in some cases, a jury will be appointed. In these circumstances, the Coroner's Officer will explain the procedures in more detail.

You may be asked to attend the inquest, but in some circumstances, documentary evidence can be accepted instead of attending court. If an inquest is held, the Coroner will register the death on your behalf. The Registrar will write to you when this has been done and explain how you can obtain a Registrar's Certified Copy of Entry, or the 'Death Certificate'.