

Candidate Information Pack

ASSISTANT CORONERS

West Sussex and the City of Brighton and Hove

(This is a joint recruitment exercise but appointments will be made to a specific jurisdiction.)

INTERVIEWS 11th, 14th and 15th February 2019

Relevant Authority: West Sussex and City of Brighton and Hove

20th December 2018

ASSISTANT CORONERS FOR WESTSUSSEX AND THE CITY OF BRIGHTON AND HOVE JURISDICTIONS

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This recruitment pack has been drafted in accordance with the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

1. ADVERT

Assistant Coroners for West Sussex and the City of Brighton and Hove

This is a joint recruitment exercise but appointments will be made to a specific jurisdiction.

Salary – fee paid, in the region of £ 350.00 per day (subject to review)

West Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council are seeking to appoint Assistant Coroners to support the Senior Coroners across the full range of coroner duties in order to deliver a high quality coroner service to the people of West Sussex and/or the City of Brighton and Hove.

West Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council are looking for exceptional candidates with excellent proven organisational, management and efficiency skills, as well as experience of managing and embracing change. You will work closely with either Senior Coroner to ensure value for money, performance and financial efficiencies.

You will be required to demonstrate knowledge and experience of coroner law and of basic medicine, have proven skills in conducting investigations and an understanding of court procedure. You will also need to demonstrate the excellent communication and interpersonal skills necessary to deal with sensitive situations.

The successful candidate will be required to carry out the duties and responsibilities of a coroner as defined in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and associated rules and regulations and as further described in various guidance issued by the Chief Coroner.

These are fee paid positions although they will involve a regular commitment, which is to be agreed between the assistant coroner, senior coroner and the local authority.

It is a Coroner's personal responsibility (and not that of his/her clerk/secretary) to ensure that they sit when possible. The Chief Coroner and the Lord Chancellor would expect an assistant coroner to be offered and be able to accept a minimum of 15 sitting days each financial year.

The successful candidate will be a barrister or a solicitor or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives and satisfy the judicial-appointment eligibility condition on a 5 year basis. They will be under the age of 70 and be subject to the appointment and eligibility conditions within the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 (s.23 and Schedule 3).

Once a Coroner is appointed they are then a Judicial Office holder until they reach the age of 70 years (compulsory retirement age) unless they choose to resign or are removed by the Lord Chief Justice or Lord Chancellor prior to their 70th birthday.

If you wish to have an informal discussion or arrange a visit, please contact Claire Wilton (West Sussex) by email claire.wilton@westsussex.gov.uk or Paul Holloway (City of Brighton and Hove) paul.holloway@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

Suitably qualified applicants are requested to email their CV, and their application to: claire.wilton@westsussex.gov.uk AND paul.holloway@brighton-hove.gov.uk. Please specify whether you are applying for one or both Areas.

Closing date: 22nd January 2018 – Interviews will be held on 11th, 14th and 15th February 2019.

Notification

The vacancy for this post has been notified to the Chief Coroner and Lord Chancellor (as required by statute).

2. CORONER SERVICE INFORMATION

Area information

West Sussex

The West Sussex coroner area includes an area of 1991 square kilometres with a current population of around 820,000, 40% of the population are currently 65+. Bordering counties include: Hampshire, Surrey and East Sussex

The number of deaths registered annually is 8,600 with approximately 3,600 cases (41%) referred to the Senior Coroner. Post mortem examinations are conducted at two Hospital Trusts by hospital pathologists. In 2017, 337 inquests were held (11%) and 1269 post-mortem examinations (35%) The Senior Coroner is expected to aim to keep post-mortem levels to 30% of reported deaths or below.

The coroner area contains sections of the M23 motorway as well as several major A-roads, main rail lines to/from London and underground lines. There is one prison (an adult male open prison); there are also two mental health detention centres.

There are three hospitals, St Richards Hospital, , Worthing Hospital and Princess Royal Hospital , well as several community hospitals and a specialist Burns unit.

Office and court accommodation

The service is located in dedicated accommodation in Chichester. The Coroners Court is located in Crawley, however relocation of the Court is likely to happen later this year. The service is co-located with the Registration Service. The Coroner's Court is available Monday-Friday allowing inquests to be opened quickly with dates set for inquest hearings, usually within the required six months. The average time from opening to hearing is currently 18 weeks.

Staff

Ten coroner's officers are employed by the Sussex police authority. In addition there is a coroner's officer manager. The Senior Coroner, the assistant coroners and coroner's officers are supported by two administrative staff employed by West Sussex Council.

Coroners Officers are based in Worthing Police Station . The administrative staff are located with the Senior Coroner in Chichester.

Management

Accommodation, contracts, tendering, finance and support staff are managed by the coroner service manager, who is employed by the Council.

The coroner service manager works closely with the Senior Coroner on the delivery of the service to ensure those affected by the work of the Coroners office receive a high quality service.

Daily operations

As these are fee paid positions the Assistant Coroner will work on days and times as agreed with the senior coroner and the relevant local authority. You will be expected on occasion to be available to assist on an out of hours rota system.

The administrative support staff are responsible for answering incoming calls from the public on weekdays 9am – 5pm.

The City of Brighton and Hove

The City of Brighton and Hove coroner area includes an area of 82.79 square miles with a current population of around 280,000. The City's population as a whole is younger than the national average. Adjoining counties are West Sussex, Surrey and East Sussex.

The number of deaths registered annually is 2700 with approximately 1270 cases (47%) referred to the Senior Coroner. Post mortem examinations are conducted at the City's public mortuary by a number of Consultant Pathologists. In 2017 242 inquests were held (19%) and 506 post-mortem examinations (40%). The Senior Coroner is expected to aim to keep post-mortem levels to 30% of reported deaths or below.

This coroner area contains sections of the A27 (including the Brighton by-pass) as well as several major A-roads, main rail lines to/from London and Ashford International. There is one prison in Lewes which houses a wing for elderly male prisoners. These men are brought to the hospital in Brighton if they become ill and not infrequently, if they die, questions are raised concerning their treatment in prison and the timeliness of their transfer to Brighton. These questions require an Inquest. There is also a mental health detention unit and large psychiatric general unit, plus private mental health facilities.

There are three hospitals, the main one is a teaching hospital with medical school, with the SE Trauma Centre and several tertiary units, as well as two private hospitals.

At the main hospital in Brighton we have been running a Medical Examiner scheme as early adoptors for many years. This has reduced the number of reported deaths but increased the number of complex hospital death Inquests.

We have two universities, several language schools, and a large stadium.

The City has a high number of homeless individuals. We also have a high suicide rate and a high number of drug related deaths.

Office and court accommodation

The Coroner's service is located in dedicated accommodation in Brighton. The Coroners Court is at Woodvale. It is small but it is where the majority of Inquests are held. We are able to work closely with the Registrars and with Bereavement Services.

The coroner's court is available every day, allowing inquests to be opened quickly with dates set for inquest hearings, usually within four to five months. The average time from opening to hearing is currently 15 weeks.

Staff

Five coroner's officers are employed by the Sussex police authority. The Senior Coroner, the assistant coroners and coroner's officers are supported by three administrative staff employed by Brighton and Hove City Council.

Coroners Officers are based in John Street Police Station in Brighton . The administrative staff are located with the Senior Coroner in Woodvale.

Management

Accommodation, contracts, tendering, finance and support staff are managed by the Head of Life Events, a senior B&HCC employee.

He works closely with the Senior Coroner on the delivery of the service to ensure those affected by the work of the Coroners office receive a high quality service with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of the bereaved.

Daily operations

As these are fee paid positions the Assistant Coroner will work on days and times as agreed with the Senior Coroner and the relevant local authority. You will be expected, from time to time, to be available to assist on an out of hours rota system.

The administrative support staff are responsible for answering incoming calls from the public on weekdays 9am – 5pm.

Coroner's Officers and the Coroners are on call 24/7/365

3. JOB SUMMARY

JOB FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To support the Senior Coroner to provide a high quality coroner service in accordance with statutory provisions, case law and associated guidance issued by the Chief Coroner, the Ministry of Justice and the Lord Chancellor.
2. To conduct investigations into deaths when made aware that bodies of deceased persons lie within the coroner area and there is reason to suspect that:
 - The deceased died a violent or unnatural death;
 - The cause of death is unknown; or
 - The deceased died while in custody or otherwise in state detention.
3. To determine the identity of the deceased and how, when and where the deceased came by his or her death; decide if a post-mortem examination is necessary and give directions to a pathologist or other appropriately qualified expert medical practitioner or scientist; to establish the medical cause of death.
4. Where required, to hold an inquest, with or without a jury, in accordance with Section 7 of the 2009 Act and as appropriate, to notify the relevant Registrar of Deaths of the findings and conclusion of the inquest, or the natural cause of death ascertained with or without a post-mortem examination or that the death reported does not require further inquiry or investigation.
5. To provide clear direction to staff on coroner investigations.
6. To be sensitive and, as far as possible, responsive to the needs and requirements of those who engage with the coroner service, including the bereaved, witnesses, medical personnel, police, the media and other stakeholders; and to manage their expectations.
7. To assist the Senior Coroner to ensure that the coroner service has planned for and is prepared for any significant emergencies which may occur or affect the coroner area.

8. To comply with the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013 for 24 hour availability. To take into account the religious and cultural requirements of faith communities.
9. Where necessary to assist the Senior Coroner to engage with the local community, for example giving talks and seeking feedback and views. To collaborate and engage with external agencies and stakeholders as required.
10. To work co-operatively with the local authority staff team and police employees [where applicable] to ensure a safe, harmonious and effective working environment.
11. To deal with claims for treasure when required in accordance with statutory regulations and guidance.
12. To keep an up-to-date working knowledge of coroner law, practice and guidance, and advise staff on developments as appropriate.
13. To undertake compulsory Judicial College and Chief Coroner training as appropriate.
14. To be committed to ensuring expenditure is reasonable and controlled, working closely with the Senior Coroner and Registration & Coroner's Service Manager [as applicable] to regularly monitor expenditure and report possible risk.

ROLE REQUIREMENTS	Essential	Desirable
All applicants must be a barrister or solicitor or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives and satisfy the judicial appointment eligibility condition on a 5 year basis and be under the age of 70.	x	
Thorough, up to date knowledge of legislation, case law and guidance relating to coroner's duties.	x	
Knowledge of structures and procedures of the police, in particular those relating to the investigation of sudden or suspicious deaths.	x	
Must have knowledge of the extent to which cultural and religious requirements can be met within the constraints of coroner law and practice.	x	
Knowledge of the organisational structures of local government including an understanding of the challenges facing local government, both at present and in the future.	x	
An ability to drive the service and be receptive to new ideas, reforms and diverse needs.	x	
Ability to work collaboratively with staff and their employers.	x	
Effective verbal and written communication skills and the ability to explain legal and medical terms to people from non-legal or non-medical backgrounds.	x	
Excellent analytical skills and a consistency of decision-making and administrative direction.	x	
Ability to work in sensitive situations with a wide range of stakeholders (e.g. relatives, police officers, medical personnel, mortuary staff, Registrars, witnesses and the media).	x	

Able to deal with emotionally charged situations that require sensitive handling and confident/positive judgement.	x	
Full current driving licence (unless disability precludes this) and use of a vehicle for work purposes.		x
Experience of legal work in the coroner jurisdiction (e.g. representing clients at inquest)	x	
Previous experience as an assistant coroner		x
Experience of conducting investigative enquiries including demonstrating clarity of thought in identifying issues relevant to the investigation.	x	
<p>Other Requirements</p> <p>If you have current or previous Coroner experience please state the following information:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) how many days worked as coroner; (b) the nature of the work; (c) the division of time between office and court; (d) the extent of experience in completing Forms 100A and 100B; (e) the number and type of inquests conducted; (f) the number of long inquests and their subject matter; and (g) the number of Article 2 inquests conducted. 		

4. SUMMARY OF TERMS & CONDITIONS

The conditions of service applicable to the post are those set out in Schedule 3, Coroners and Justice Act 2009. The Assistant Coroner holds office on whatever terms are from time to time agreed between the coroner and the relevant local authority. You will not be an employee of the Local Authority.

Fee

The post is fee paid and the current fee is expected to be in the region of £350 per day. (Subject to review)

Hours of work

As these are fee paid positions the Assistant Coroner will work on days and times as agreed with the senior coroner.

You may be asked to participate in an out of hour's service, by agreement with the senior coroner.

Holiday entitlement

None (fee paid appointment).

Payment of expenses

Expenses will be paid in line with the Council's expenses policy. Reasonable expenses for attendance at Judicial Training (including travel expenses, accommodation where necessary and a normal sitting fee payable for each day of training) will be paid by the Local Authority.

Indemnity

The Council will indemnify the Assistant Coroner for costs or damages in relation to legal proceedings in accordance with Regulation 17 of The Coroners Allowances, Fees and Expenses Regulations 2013.

Notice period

The Assistant Coroner may resign from office by giving four weeks notice in writing to the relevant authority, however the resignation does not take effect unless and until it is accepted by the authority.

Politically restricted post

This post is politically restricted under the terms of Schedule 3, paragraph 4 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

The Guide to Judicial Conduct

The Assistant Coroner will comply with the standards as set out in the Guide to Judicial Conduct and other associated guidance.

5. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS

Applications

To apply for these positions, you are required to submit a CV, and a full supporting statement of up to two A4 pages. It is important that your supporting statement fully addresses the criteria and requirements detailed in the job summary section above.

1. Efficient management and organisation.
2. Up to date knowledge of coroner law and guidance.
3. Coroner skills in the office and in court.
4. Integrity, sound judgment and decisiveness.
5. Collaborative working, with staff, relevant authority and police.
6. Communication skills.
7. Sensitivity to diversity and cultural requirements.

If you do not complete a full supporting statement, your application will be rejected. Please ensure you include your work, home and mobile contact numbers, home address and e-mail addresses where applicable. Please note that correspondence will be via e-mail unless otherwise stated. All correspondence and details provided will remain confidential.

Employment references

Please include the name, address and contact details for two references. Candidates should also state their relationship to the referee and at least one should be your current/most recent employer/head of chambers/relevant authority. References will be taken up for short-listed candidates.

Evidence of qualifications

Candidates will be required to bring evidence of their qualifications to the interview.

Employment checks

The successful candidate may be required to undergo the Council's pre-appointment medical screening.

Disciplinary proceedings and criminal convictions check

Due to the nature of the post, it is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and therefore any conviction, whether spent or unspent, must be declared. Applicants invited to interview will be required to complete a declaration form.

The successful candidate will be required to undergo a DBS check.

Applicants must specify in their application if they are subject of any complaint or disciplinary proceedings by any professional body to which they belong.

Applicants will also be asked in interview to declare any matters which they believe should be brought to the attention of the Local Authority, particularly bearing in mind the basic set of guiding principles in the Guide to Judicial Conduct:

<https://www.judiciary.uk/publications/guide-to-judicial-conduct/>

Eligibility to work in the UK

Candidates must be eligible to work in the UK. The successful candidate will be required to provide original evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK.

Interview

At the interview you will be presented with a Case Study to review. You will be given time to consider this before the formal interview. . You will then be asked a series of questions on the scenario given.

Chief Coroner's role in the process

No appointment may be made unless the Chief Coroner and the Lord Chancellor consent to it.

Once appointed a Coroner becomes and remains an independent judicial officer holder.

6. RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE

Suitably qualified applicants are requested to email their CV, their application and their signed declaration form to: [email address]

Closing date: 22nd January 2019

Interview invitations will be sent out on 8th February 2019

Interview dates: 11th February 2019, 14th February 2019 and 15th February 2019 (Brighton and Hove only)

If you do not hear by 8th February 2019, please assume you have not been shortlisted.

The interview panel will be:

Ms Veronica Hamilton Deeley – Senior Coroner - City of Brighton and Hove
Ms Penelope Schofield – Senior Coroner – West Sussex
Ms Claire Wilton or Mr Paul Holloway, Local Authority Proper Officers.

We are aiming for the successful candidate to take up post ASAP.