

Candidate Information Pack

ASSISTANT CORONER

Birmingham and Solihull Districts

Relevant Authority:

Birmingham City Council

January 2019

**ASSISTANT CORONER FOR BIRMINGHAM AND SOLIHULL
INFORMATION PACK**

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

1. ADVERT

Assistant Coroner for Birmingham and Solihull

Fee paid post, in the region of £ 454 per day.

Birmingham City Council is seeking to appoint a new Assistant Coroner to support the Senior and Area coroner across the full range of coroner duties in order to deliver a high quality coroner service to the people of Birmingham.

Birmingham City Council is looking for an exceptional candidate with excellent proven organisational, management and efficiency skills, as well as experience of managing and embracing change. You will work closely with the Senior Coroner and Area 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.

This is a fee paid position although it is likely to involve a regular commitment, which is to be agreed between you, the 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 offer a minimum of 15 sitting days each financial year. However, it is recognised that there is a variance of workload in each area.

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 and Lord Chancellor prior to their 70th birthday.

The Assistant Coroner will be based in the dedicated court and coroner's office 50 Newton St, Birmingham B4 6NE where it is co-located with the Registration Service. Office opening hours are 9am-5pm.

The candidate pack is available here:

If you wish to have an informal discussion or arrange a visit, please contact Lynne Boyle on 0121 303 4274.

Suitably qualified applicants are requested to email their CV and a supporting 2 page statement to: lynne.boyle@birmingham.gov.uk.

Closing date: 31 January 2019

Interview date: 12 March 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

The Birmingham & Solihull coroner area includes an area of 170 square miles with a current population of around 1.3 million. The City of Birmingham and the Borough of Solihull has a young and culturally diverse population. The jurisdiction incorporates a category B prison, a secure forensic mental health unit, several large mental health inpatient units, an airport, a lot of industry, 4 acute hospitals including the University Hospital of Birmingham which is a regional trauma and transplant centre and several rehabilitation, community and specialist hospitals. The bordering counties are Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Coventry, Staffordshire and the Black Country.

The number of deaths registered annually averages around 5000 cases referred to the senior coroner. Post mortem examinations are conducted either at the Birmingham Central Mortuary by various Hospital Pathologists or at the regional Forensic Mortuary. In 2017 799 inquests were held (16%) and 1755 post-mortem examinations (34%).

The coroner area contains sections of the M6 and M5 motorways as well as several major A-roads, main rail lines to/from London and tram services, Birmingham Airport and various large sporting facilities which will be part of the Commonwealth games in 2022.

Office and court accommodation

The service is located in dedicated accommodation, including offices, mortuary and court in Central Birmingham and with a satellite court sitting 2 days a week in Solihull. One or both Courts sit daily 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 12 weeks.

Staff

10 coroner's officers are employed by Birmingham City Council. The Senior Coroner, Area Coroner, coroner team and coroner's officers are supported by approximately 10 administrative and court staff employed by Birmingham City Council. The mortuary is staffed by a mortuary manager and 4 other qualified APT's.

All staff are co-located with the Senior Coroner and full-time Area Coroner.

Currently there are 5 Assistant Coroners.

Management

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

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 coroner team 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.

You will be expected to be available out of hours on a rota basis.

The administrative support staff are responsible for answering incoming calls from the public on

weekdays from 8am to 4pm.

3. JOB SUMMARY

Post Title	ASSISTANT CORONER
Service Area	<i>Coroners court</i>
Contact point:	<i>Registration & Coroner Service Manager</i>
Location	<i>CORONER SERVICE 50 Newton Street, Birmingham</i>

To deliver a high quality coroner service to the people of Birmingham in accordance with statutory provisions, case law, best practice and associated guidance.

JOB FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To support the Senior Coroner [and Area Coroner] to provide a high-quality coroner service in accordance with statutory provisions, case law and associated guidance issued by the Chief Coroner.
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; 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 Coroners and Justice Act 2009 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 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
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 coroners' duties.	x	
Knowledge of structures and procedures of the police, in particular those relating to the investigation of sudden or suspicious deaths.	x	
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 and the coroner service, 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 the relevant local authority.	x	
Excellent verbal and written communication 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. bereaved relatives, police officers, medical personnel, mortuary staff, registrars, witnesses and the media).	x	
Ability 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	
Experience of conducting investigative enquiries including demonstrating clarity of thought in identifying issues relevant to the investigation.	x	
<p>Requirements for applicants who may have coroner experience</p> <p>If you have experience of being a coroner it is important that any coroner experience is provided in detail. The form should therefore require the applicant to state:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) how many days worked as coroner since appointment; (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. You hold office on whatever terms are from time agreed. You will not be an employee of the Local Authority.

Salary

The post is fee paid and the current fee is expected to be in the region of £454 per day.

Hours of work

As this is a fee paid position you 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 (this is a 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 you 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

You may resign from office by giving 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

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

5. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS

Applications

You are required to submit a CV and full supporting statement of up to two A4 pages. It is important that your supporting statement fully addresses the following criteria.

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 will 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 and clearly the outcome.

The candidate should declare any other 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.

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

You may be required to undertake a short presentation as part of the interview process.

Chief Coroner's role in the process

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

Local authorities appoint coroners but do not employ them. Once appointed a Coroner becomes and remains an independent judicial officer holder.

6. RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE

Suitably qualified applicants are requested to email their CV and supporting statement to: lynne.boyle@birmingham.gov.uk.

Closing date: 31/01/19

Interview invitations will be sent out: week commencing 25/02/19

Interview date: 12/03/19

If you do not hear by 01/03/19 please assume you have not been shortlisted.

The interview panel will be:

Louise Hunt – Senior Coroner

Emma Brown – Area Coroner

Chris Neville - Acting Director Regulation & Enforcement, Place Directorate

We are aiming for the successful candidate to take up post as soon as possible