

# Candidate Information Pack

## **SENIOR GWENT CORONER**

Newport City Council

January 2019

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## **CORONER for Newport City, Monmouthshire, Torfaen, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Unitary Councils area**

**(‘Gwent Coroner’)**

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

## 1. ADVERT

### **Senior Coroner for Newport City, Monmouthshire, Torfaen, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Councils Area (Gwent area)**

**Salary £120,000 pa**

Newport City Council, on behalf of all of the above Councils is seeking to appoint a new Senior Coroner following the retirement of the previous post-holder in 2018.

The Senior Coroner stands at the head of the local coroner service and statutory coroner area and takes the lead on coroner work and will be expected to conduct inquests which are difficult or complex or will be likely to attract significant publicity.

The number of reported deaths is c2,500 per annum. Accordingly we appoint our senior coroner on a full time basis, which equates to 37 hours a week. Newport City Council acts as the lead authority for the appointment and day to day management of the coroners office.

The salary will include payment for out of hours availability by agreement.

Newport City Council is looking for an exceptional candidate with excellent proven leadership, organisational, management and efficiency skills, as well as experience of managing and embracing change. You will work closely with the local authority manager to ensure value for money, performance and financial efficiencies. Collaborative working with the local authority, the police and other stakeholders is essential.

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

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 which requires a minimum 5 years legal qualification. You must be under the age of 70, have experience of working as a Senior Coroner, area coroner or assistant coroner and be subject to the appointment and eligibility conditions within the [Coroners and Justice Act 2009 \(s.23 and Schedule 3\)](#).

A candidate pack is available on Newport City Council's Job Vacancies website - <http://www.newport.gov.uk/en/Council-Democracy/Council-jobs/Council-jobs.aspx>

If you wish to have an informal discussion or arrange a visit, please contact:  
Meirion Rushworth, Head of Finance on 01633 656656 / 07817 256147

**Suitably qualified applicants are requested to email their CV and supporting statement to: [jobs@newport.gov.uk](mailto:jobs@newport.gov.uk)**

**Closing date: Monday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

**Candidates shortlisted: w/c 11th February, 2019**

**Interview invitations will be sent out: w/c 25th February**

**Interview date: w/c 11<sup>th</sup> March**

**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 Gwent coroner area includes an area of 1,616 square miles with a current population of around 3.1 million, of which 20% are over 65 years of age. It covers the former County of Gwent in South East Wales, now made up of 5 Unitary Councils – Newport City , Monmouthshire, Torfaen , Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Councils. The area is co-terminus with Gwent Police and the Aneurin Bevan University 'Health Board.

The number of deaths registered annually averages around 6,000 with approximately 2,500 – 3,000 cases (c40%) referred to the Gwent coroner. Post mortem examinations are nearly all conducted at the Royal Gwent Hospital in Newport by hospital pathologists whilst facilities also exist at the Neville Hall Hospital in Abergavenny. In 2014/15 and 2015/16, around 250 inquests and 900 post-mortem examinations were held each year. The Senior Coroner is expected to aim to keep post-mortem levels to 30% of reported deaths or below.

The coroner area contains a section of the M4 motorway as well as several dual carriageways and major A-roads and a main rail line to/from London. There are 2 prisons – HMP Usk, holding Category C adult male prisoners with a capacity of 273 and HMP Prescoed, holding Category D prisoners with a capacity of 230; there is also a mental health detention centre.

There are currently 2 acute hospitals, The Royal Gwent hospital in Newport and Neville Hall hospital in Abergavenny. However, a new 471 bed Critical and Specialist care hospital is due to open in 2021 at the Grange university hospital, Llanfrechfa. The area has a number of smaller community hospitals.

The area has a number of sporting and entertainment venues and in the Summer of 2019, a 5,000 capacity conference centre will be opening near Newport.

### **Office and court accommodation**

The current coroner service is run from a private practice Solicitors office, utilising support staff there. Smaller hearings and meetings are held at the practice conference room whilst the Coroner Court is held at the Civic Centre, which has a dedicated court for this purpose and is available Monday-Friday allowing inquests to be opened quickly with dates set for inquest hearings, usually within the required six months.

The new, dedicated coroner service will be co-located with the Newport City Council registration service, based at the 'Mansion House', Newport. Appropriate meeting rooms are available there for the smaller hearings and meetings, in liaison with the registration service. Meeting rooms are also available in the main Council offices at the Civic Centre.

It is envisaged that the current service will have moved to this new accommodation prior to the new Senior Coroner taking up their appointment.

### **Staff**

Under the new service structure, the staffing arrangements are:

- 2 Assistant Coroners employed on a casual basis , as required
- 2 full-time Coroner's officers, funded and seconded from Gwent Police
- 1 full-time Coroner's officer, funded by the Local Authorities
- 2 full-time Support Assistants (please see attached structure)

## **Management**

Accommodation, contracts, tendering, finance and support staff are managed by Newport City Council's Registration Service manager, in close liaison with the Coroner.

Newport City Council, on behalf of the other Authorities, works closely with the Gwent Coroner on the delivery of the service.

## **Daily operations**

The Gwent Coroner will work 37 hours per week Monday-Friday between 8.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. This arrangement allows the service to provide a high level of service and performance to meet the requirements of the Coroners & Justice Act 2009 and the Chief Coroner's guidance.

The Gwent Coroner will also be available outside the above hours to deal with emergencies and other urgent requests, using the coroner team (see below) on a rota basis.

The administrative support staff are responsible for answering incoming calls from the public on weekdays from 8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

## **The coroner team**

The Senior Coroner, who is an independent judicial office holder, leads a team consisting of:

- casual Assistant Coroners, as necessary
- 3 Coroner's officers

The Assistant Coroners will provide cover when the Senior Gwent Coroner is unavailable due to leave, sickness, training etc and as additional support (by agreement with the local authority).

The Senior Gwent Coroner takes the lead on coroner work and will be expected to conduct inquests which are difficult or complex or will be likely to attract significant publicity.

The Senior Gwent Coroner is expected to hold regular coroner team meetings.

### 3. JOB SUMMARY

<b>Post Title</b>	<b>SENIOR GWENT CORONER</b>
<b>Service Area</b>	Corporate
<b>Contact point:</b>	Head of Finance
<b>Location</b>	Mansion House - Newport

To deliver a high quality coroner service to the people of Newport City, Monmouthshire, Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly Councils (Gwent coroner's area) in accordance with statutory provisions, case law, best practice and associated guidance.

#### JOB FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To be responsible for the statutory Gwent coroner's service.
2. To provide a high quality coroner service in accordance with statutory provisions, case law and associated guidance issued by the Chief Coroner.
3. To lead on coroner work and manage the area's caseload; to lead and support the coroner team.
4. To work effectively with the local authorities and police authority where applicable and to hold regular meetings with both and with local Registration Service managers.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Where required, to hold an inquest, with or without a jury, in accordance with Section 7 of the Coroners and Justice 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.
8. To provide clear direction to staff on coroner investigations.
9. 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.
10. In liaison with other key stakeholders, to ensure that the coroner service has planned for and is prepared for any significant emergencies which may occur or affect the coroner area.
11. To comply with the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013 for 24 hour availability. To take into account the religious and cultural requirements of faith communities.
12. To be prepared 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.

13. To work co-operatively with the local authority staff team and police employees to ensure a safe, harmonious and effective working environment.
14. To deal with claims for treasure in accordance with statutory regulations and guidance.
15. To assist the local authorities in the appointment of assistant coroners.
16. To make annual and other returns, as required, to the Chief Coroner or Lord Chancellor in connection with the investigations held and the deaths inquired into.
17. To keep an up-to-date working knowledge of coroner law, practice and guidance, and advise staff on developments as appropriate.
18. To undertake compulsory Judicial College and Chief Coroner training as appropriate.
19. To be committed to ensuring expenditure is reasonable and controlled, working closely with the lead Local Authority to monitor expenditure and report possible risk.

<b>ROLE REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>Essential</b>	<b>Desirable</b>
Must be a barrister or solicitor or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives and satisfy the judicial appointment eligibility condition with minimum 5 years legal qualification and be under the age of 70.	<b>x</b>	
Thorough, up to date knowledge of legislation, case law and guidance relating to coroner's duties.	<b>x</b>	
Knowledge of structures and procedures of the police, in particular those relating to the investigation of sudden or suspicious deaths.	<b>x</b>	
Must have knowledge of the extent to which cultural and religious requirements can be met within the constraints of coroner law and practice.	<b>x</b>	
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.	<b>x</b>	
An ability to drive the service and be receptive to new ideas, reforms and diverse needs.	<b>x</b>	
Ability to work collaboratively with staff and the relevant local authority.	<b>x</b>	
Excellent verbal and written communication skills and the ability to explain legal and medical terms to people from non-legal or non-medical backgrounds.	<b>x</b>	
Excellent analytical skills and a consistency of decision-making and administrative direction.	<b>x</b>	
Ability to work in sensitive situations with a wide range of stakeholders (eg. bereaved relatives, police officers, medical personnel, mortuary staff, Registrars, witnesses and the media).	<b>x</b>	
Ability to deal with emotionally charged situations that require sensitive handling and confident/positive judgement.	<b>x</b>	

Full current driving licence (unless disability precludes this) and use of a vehicle for work purposes.		<b>x</b>
Previous experience as a senior coroner, area coroner or assistant coroner.	<b>x</b>	
Experience of conducting investigative enquiries including demonstrating clarity of thought in identifying issues relevant to the investigation.	<b>x</b>	
Experience of holding inquests, including jury inquests.	<b>x</b>	
<p><b>Other Requirements</b></p> <p>You will be required to work 37 hours per week, in an arrangement to be agreed with the Local Authority and ensure the office is available Monday to Friday between 8.30 a.m to 4.30 p.m. You will provide an out of hours service on call 24/7 unless you are sick or on leave.</p>		



#### **4. SUMMARY OF TERMS & CONDITIONS OF THE SENIOR CORONER**

The conditions of service applicable to the post are those set out in Schedule 3, Coroners and Justice Act 2009. The Senior Coroner will provide the coronial services in accordance with the terms and conditions from time to time agreed by the coroner and Newport City Council. The Senior Coroner will not be an employee of the Council.

##### **Salary**

The annual salary for the post is £120,000 per annum for a 37 hour per week together with the provision of an out of hours service.

##### **Pension Scheme**

A Senior Coroner may join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LPGS) in accordance with any provisions relating to coroner appointments as applied to that scheme.

##### **Hours of work**

The post holder will be required to work the hours necessary to meet the requirements of the post.

Following discussion and agreement with the Council, the Gwent Coroner will arrange for an out of hours service. In accordance with The Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013, the Gwent Coroner shall at all times be available to address matters relating to an investigation into a death, which must be dealt with immediately and cannot wait until the next working day, including emergencies and other urgent requests.

The Gwent Coroner is normally expected to live within one hour travelling distance of the office and to agree an appropriate working arrangement for 37 hours per week with the Local Authority which maximises a daily presence in the Coroner's office.

##### **Holiday entitlement**

The Gwent Coroner will be expected to take an annual leave entitlement of 30 days.

##### **Payment of expenses**

Expenses will be paid in line with the Council's expenses policy.

##### **Indemnity**

The Council will indemnify the Senior 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 Senior Coroner 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. The Senior Coroner will be expected to give six months' notice of retirement or resignation to enable the Council to comply with the provisions of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 in filling the vacancy.

##### **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 Senior 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**

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. Leadership and authority.
2. Efficient management and organisation.
3. Up to date knowledge of coroner law and guidance.
4. Coroner skills in the office and in court.
5. Integrity, sound judgment and decisiveness.
6. Collaborative working, with staff, relevant authority and police.
7. Communication skills.
8. 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.

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 state the salary or fee payable. 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.

### **Chief Coroner's role in the process**

The Chief Coroner or his nominee will be providing advice to the Council throughout the recruitment process, in particular so as to ensure that the process is fully transparent and fair. Although the Chief Coroner or his nominee may be at the interviews they are not a member of the panel and as such have no role in scoring candidates or voting for a candidate.

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**

Closing date: 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2019

Candidates shortlisted: w/c 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2019

Interview invitations will be sent out: w/c 25<sup>th</sup> February

Interview date: w/c 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2019

The interview panel will be:

Mr D M Rushworth – Newport City Council – Head of Finance  
Mr G Price - Newport City Council – Head of Law & Regulation  
Chief Coroner or nominee

Representation from one or more of the constituent Local Authorities / Police & Crime Commissioner or nominee in Gwent will also be considered for the panel which will be confirmed for shortlisted candidates.

We are aiming for the successful candidate to take up post as soon as possible, allowing for notice periods etc.

# Coroner Service Structure

