

Candidate Information Pack

AREA CORONER

Avon

Relevant Authority:

Bristol City Council

February 2019

**AREA CORONER FOR AVON
INFORMATION PACK**

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

1. ADVERT

0.8 FTE Area Coroner for Avon

Salary £102k per annum pro rata (from 1st April 2019)

Bristol City Council is seeking to appoint a 0.8 FTE Area Coroner post for the first time.

The Area Coroner will work closely with the Senior Coroner to provide judicial leadership to the coroner team as well as conducting your own coroner investigations and inquests. You will be the nominated deputy for the Senior Coroner. There will be no set days, but will work on an ad hoc basis dependent on the requirement of the court.

Bristol 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 senior coroner and local authority manager to ensure value for money, performance and financial efficiencies. Collaborative working with the senior coroner, Bristol City Council, Avon and Somerset Police and other stakeholders is essential.

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.

It is desirable that the successful candidate has proven experience of running or sharing running a coroner's jurisdiction including carrying out investigations, case management, and conducting inquests.

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, have experience of working as an assistant coroner or area coroner 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.

The candidate pack is available here: <https://jobs.bristol.gov.uk/vacancy/area-coroner-for-avon-380658.html>

Please note the portal only allows you to upload one document referred to as CV. Please submit your CV and Cover Letter as one document, which should be no longer than two A4 pages

Closing date: 27th March 2019

Interview date: 29 April 2019

Notification

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

2. Avon CORONER SERVICE

INFORMATION Area information

The current HM Senior Coroner for the Avon jurisdiction has been post since 2011. There are five assistant coroners. Since 2011 the Coroner service for Avon has undergone significant change improvements including improved efficiency of key process including:

- Setting up the Avon Coroner web site as a key tool for HM Coroner to communicate externally with the public and interested parties, including court listings <https://www.avon-coroner.com>
- Moving to CIVICA electronic administration system in February 2018 including the case management of all inquest cases.
- Improving financial efficiency in a variety of ways including through contracts, staff restructuring and implementing a data retention policy and consequent reduction of stored paper files and collaboration with neighboring Coroner jurisdictions.
- Reducing the need for post mortems in all cases (eg, mesothelioma, head injuries and falls) and the
- Fast tracking of straightforward inquest cases;

The appointment of an Area Coroner is a continuation of the planned improvements to provide resilience to the Coroner team.

National Ministry of Justice statistics show that in 2017 Avon was 8th largest jurisdiction in terms of numbers of deaths reported.

Avon is a large geographical area covering the cities/towns of Bristol, Bath and Weston. The Avon coroner area covers four unitary authorities, Bristol, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset, and Bath and North East Somerset councils, an area of 520 square miles with a current population over 1.1 million. It has an extensive coastline with a port and dockyard, with rural and industrial areas. Avon is a major transport hub, with an international airport, four prisons (Leyhill, Eastwood Park, Bristol, Ashfield); the M32, M5 and M4 with a large interchange; it has a number of regional hospitals and mental health units (eg, Southmead, Bristol Royal Infirmary, Royal United Hospital, Bath, Weston –Super-Mare, Callington Road). All of this results in the Avon area having a significant number of complex, high profile, inquest cases. Bordering counties are Somerset and Wiltshire and Gloucestershire.

Avon has a significant number of jury inquests – in 2017 there were 14. By their nature they are more complicated. Avon also has a large number of non-jury inquests that also take a number of court days to complete due to the nature of the investigation and the scope set.

The number of deaths registered annually averages around 9,700 with approximately 44% - 4,300 cases referred to the senior coroner. Post mortem examinations are conducted at Flax Bourton Public and Forensic mortuary. In 2017, 750 inquests were held 17% of coroner cases and 2,790 post-mortem examinations

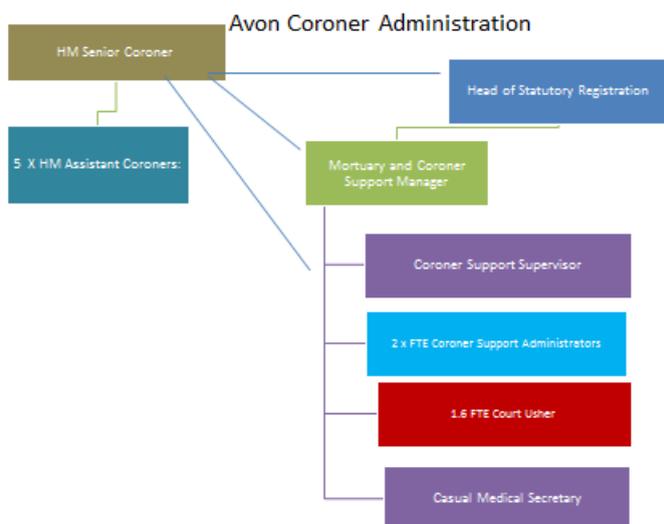
Office and court accommodation

The Avon Coroner’s service is located in dedicated accommodation at a self-contained pleasant semi-rural site at Flax Bourton in North Somerset. One building contains the Coroner, Assistant Coroners, administration team, Coroner’s Officers and two courts. In a separate building there is a modern public and forensic mortuary.

The coroner’s court, which is within the coroner’s building, 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 in 2017 was 17 weeks, 5 weeks less than the national average.

Staff

Six coroner’s officers are employed by the Avon and Somerset Police Authority. In addition there is a Coroner’s Officer supervisor. The Senior Coroner, Area Coroner, coroner team are supported by three administrative staff employed by Bristol City Council. All staff are co-located with the Senior Coroner and Area Coroner.



Management

Accommodation, contracts, tendering, finance and support staff are managed by the Mortuary and Coroner Support Manager who is employed by Bristol City Council in the Legal Department. Strategic support is provided by the Head of Statutory Registration, and the Senior Coroner has access to the Director of Legal Services as required.

The Mortuary and Coroner Support Manager and the council’s Head of Statutory Registration both closely with the Senior Coroner [and when needed the Avon and Somerset police responsible for coroner’s officers] on the delivery of the service to ensure those affected by the work of the coroner team receive a high-quality service. Avon and Somerset Police and Bristol City Council have a good working relationship with HM Coroner for Avon. The local authority and HM Coroner meet regularly, and

when needed concerns are raised on both sides and there is collaborative working to deliver improvements including financial savings.

Daily operations

The Area Coroner will usually be expected to work 8 hours each day Monday-Friday between 9am and 5pm at the office and court accommodation at Flax Bourton. This arrangement allows the service to provide a high level of service and performance to meet the requirements of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

The Area Coroner will be expected on occasion 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 7am to 4pm.

The coroner team

The Area Coroner, who is an independent judicial-office holder works as part of the coroner team led by the Senior Coroner, alongside five fee paid assistant coroners, The Area Coroner is expected to be the nominated deputy in line with the Chief Coroner's guidance. The Area Coroner will provide cover when the Senior Coroner is unavailable due to leave, sickness, training etc and as additional support (by agreement with the local authority) in office and case work.

The current Avon Coroner structure:	The new structure:
Senior Coroner	Senior Coroner
	0.8 FTE Area Coroner
5 Assistant Coroners	5 Assistant Coroners - Minimum 17 days each.

3. JOB SUMMARY

Post Title	AREA CORONER
Service Area	<i>Statutory Registration,</i>
Contact point:	<i>Head of Statutory Registration</i>
Location	<i>Avon Coroner, Old Weston Road, Flax Bourton, Avon, Bristol BS48 1UL</i>

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

JOB FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To support the Senior Coroner, who stands at the head of the local coroner service and statutory Avon coroner area.
2. To work with the Senior Coroner and coroner team to provide a high-quality coroner service in accordance with statutory provisions, case law and associated guidance issued by the Chief Coroner.
3. To support the Senior Coroner to work effectively with the Bristol City Council and Avon and Somerset police authority and to hold regular meetings with both and with local Registrars.

4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. To provide clear direction to staff on coroner investigations.
8. 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.
9. To support the Senior Coroner, 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.
10. To comply with the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013 for 24 hour availability. To take into account the religious and cultural requirements of faith communities.
11. In collaboration with the Senior Coroner, 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.
12. To work co-operatively with the local authority staff team and police employees [where applicable] to ensure a safe, harmonious and effective working environment.
13. To deal with claims for treasure in accordance with statutory regulations and guidance.
14. 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.
15. To keep an up-to-date working knowledge of coroner law, practice and guidance, and advise staff on developments as appropriate.
16. To undertake compulsory Judicial College and Chief Coroner training as appropriate.

17. To be committed to ensuring expenditure is reasonable and controlled, working closely with the 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 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	
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	
IT literacy and excellent 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. 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	
You would be expected to live within one hour travelling distance of the office.	x	
Previous experience as an area coroner or assistant coroner.	x	
Experience of conducting investigative enquiries including demonstrating clarity of thought in identifying issues relevant to the investigation.	x	
Experience of holding inquests, including jury inquests.	x	

4. SUMMARY OF TERMS & CONDITIONS OF THE AREA CORONER

The conditions of service applicable to the post are those set out in Schedule 3, Coroners and Justice Act 2009. The Area Coroner holds office on whatever terms are from time agreed by that coroner and Bristol City Council. The Area Coroner will not be an employee of the Council.

Salary

The annual salary for the post is £102k pro rata (from April 2019) together with the provision of an out of hours service.

Pension Scheme

You 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

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

You will be expected, after discussion with the Senior Coroner, to be available out of hours on a rota basis.

You are normally expected to live within one hour's travelling distance of the office and to work on a daily basis during the week in the office provided.

Holiday entitlement

You will be expected to take an annual leave entitlement of 30 days.

Payment of expenses

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

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.

4. 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 as well as the essential criteria in the job summary

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 disciplinary or complaint 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 will be given a scenario setting out a problem drawn from a likely issue that will arise in post. You will be expected to present your approach to the problem.

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.

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

5. RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE

Suitably qualified applicants are requested to apply:

<https://jobs.bristol.gov.uk/vacancy/area-coroner-for-avon-380658.html>

Closing date: 27th March 2019

If you do not hear **by 29 April 2019** please assume you have not been shortlisted.

Interview date: 29 April 2019

The interview panel will be:

- Maria Voisin, Senior Coroner
- Yvonne Dawes, Head of Statutory Registration Bristol City Council
- Chief Coroner or nominee

We are aiming for the successful candidate to take up post around 1st July 2019.