

Candidate Information Pack

ASSISTANT CORONER

Northamptonshire

Relevant Authority:

Northamptonshire County Council

19th June 2020

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ASSISTANT CORONER FOR NORTHAMPTONSHIRE CORONIAL AREA

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

1. ADVERT

Assistant Coroner for Northamptonshire Coroner area

Salary £416 Day and £208 half day rates

Closing date: Thursday 9th July 2020

About the post:

The Assistant Coroner will work closely with the Senior Coroner to provide judicial leadership to the coroner team as well as conducting their own coroner investigations and inquests. The Assistant Coroner is a nominated deputy for the Senior Coroner when the senior coroner is absent. The Assistant Coroner will be expected on occasion to be available out of hours on a rota based system.

Northamptonshire County Council is looking for an exceptional candidate with excellent proven organisational, management and efficiency skills, as well as experience of exercising sound judgement and communicating effectively. In this role, 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, local authority, the police and other stakeholders is essential.

You will be required to demonstrate knowledge and experience of coronial law, an understanding of medical terminology and 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 previous experience in a Coroner's jurisdiction including carrying out investigations, case management, and conducting inquests including Jury Inquests.

Who can apply:

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 means they will have five years of experience *whilst* holding that qualification. They will be under the age of 70, have sufficient experience of working to function an Assistant Coroner and be subject to the appointment and eligibility conditions within the [Coroners and Justice Act 2009 \(s.23 and Schedule 3\)](#).

Statutory Terms of the Appointment:

Once an Assistant 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.

How to apply:

If you wish to have an informal discussion or arrange a visit, please contact Mrs Ann Pember HM Senior Coroner, on Coroners@northamptonshire.gov.uk

Suitably qualified applicants are requested to attach their CV, supporting statement and signed Declaration by sending to HRAdvisory@northamptonshire.gov.uk

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

About Northamptonshire

Northamptonshire is ambitious, forward-looking and keen to make things happen. We have serious appetite for growth, welcoming employment and housing development, and are perfectly situated at the heart of the country, offering the most affordable homes within a one-hour drive-time of London. We are also one hour from Birmingham, Oxford, Leicester, Peterborough and Cambridge, in the heart of England. Commutable counties include Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Cambridgeshire, and Bedfordshire.

Northamptonshire offers something for everyone who visits or lives here, numerous pretty villages with thatched cottages, country lanes and parish churches and Northamptonshire is home to some of the most beautiful countryside in England. There are miles of walks, beautiful country parks, canals and substantial areas of ancient woodland just waiting to be explored. Miles of cycle path follow the landscape of the Brampton Valley Way. Rockingham Castle perches on its hilltop with views stretching to Rutland Water. Stately homes and ancestral seats, including that of the Spencer family at Althorp, are all part of the local heritage. The network of canals that interweave the county are perfect for exploring, with cruisers able to stop to sample the hospitality of the old navigational inns along the way.

Northamptonshire's main towns are Northampton, Kettering, Corby, Daventry, Towcester, Brackley, Wellingborough, Thrapston, and Oundle.

Local sporting highlights include international venues at Silverstone, the Saints rugby team, football league teams and first class county cricket. Enjoy spectacular golf courses, equestrian and country pursuits, and excellent water sports centres.



For more information, please use the following links:

www.northamptonshire.gov.uk

www.northamptonshiresurprise.com.

Specific Area Information related to the Role in Northamptonshire

The number of deaths registered annually approximately 6000 (2019 with approximately 2600 cases referred to the senior coroner. Post mortem examinations are conducted at Kettering General Hospital, Northampton General Hospital and Leicester Royal Infirmary. CT scanning is available in certain circumstances. The jurisdiction also has access to forensic, paediatric, neuro and cardio services as well as the Medical Examiner Service. In 2019, 225 inquests were held, and 925 post-mortem examinations and jury inquests were also held.

The coroner area contains sections of the M1 motorway as well as several major A-roads, main rail lines to/from London.

1. Prisons within the area are

The county of Northampton has two prisons: HMP Onley is a category C prison, HMP Ryehill is a category B prison is a medium size and run by G4S Custodial and Detention Services. A third prison is due to open in Wellingborough in the near future. It is presently in the course of construction.

2. Mental Health Units

Deaths of detained patients who die other than of natural courses require a jury inquest.

- St Andrews Hospital Northampton is a large private psychiatric hospital caring for 850 patients, many of whom are detained under the Mental Health Act.
- St Mathews Healthcare also caters for detained and informal patients and have three separate hospitals. It operates three separate hospitals namely St Matthews, The Dallingtons and Broomhill.
- St Mary's Hospital Kettering caters for both detained and informal patients
- Berrywood Hospital, Northampton which has both detained and informal patients

3. Hospitals with areas of specialism

- Northampton General Hospital is an 800 bedded acute hospital serving the town of Northampton and the surrounding area has several specialist areas including a specialist maternity unit and has a large Accident and Emergency Unit.
- Kettering General Hospital is a 640 bedded hospital
- In addition there are two large private Hospitals in the county namely Three Shires Hospital Northampton and Woodford Hospital, Kettering.

4. Care Homes

- There are approximately 250 care homes in the county of Northamptonshire.

Daily Operations and accommodation

The service is located in dedicated accommodation, including offices and two courts. The coroner's court, which is beside the coroner's offices, 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 26 weeks.

5 Coroner's Officers, 1 Team Manager and Head of Service are employed by the Council. The Senior Coroner, Assistant coroners and Coroner's Officers are supported by 3 administrative staff employed by Northamptonshire County Council.

Accommodation, contracts, tendering, finance are managed by the Head of Service and all support staff are managed by the Coroner's Team Manager, both employed by the Council.

All staff are co-located with the Senior Coroner as a centralised service covering the county.

All administrative support staff are responsible for answering incoming calls from the public on weekdays 08:30am – 4:30pm.

3. JOB SUMMARY

The Role of the coroner:

- Coroners are independent judicial office holders. When made aware that a body or bodies of deceased persons lie within the coroner area, the coroner is responsible for conducting investigations and holding inquests when required (with or without a jury) into deaths to determine **who** the deceased was, **when** and **where** the deceased came by his or her death and **how** that death occurred. A referral is made to the coroner when there is reason to suspect that:
 - i. The deceased died a violent or unnatural death;
 - ii. The cause of death is unknown; or
 - iii. The deceased died while in custody or otherwise in state detention.

- Conducting investigations of this kind will include where appropriate directing pathologists and others to determine these answers. Coroners also have a duty to produce Prevention of Future Death reports should an investigation give rise to concerns about future deaths occurring from the circumstances that caused the death. Coroners also deal with claims for treasure when required in accordance with statutory regulations and guidance.

The overview of the role of an Assistant Coroner:

- The assistant coroner supports the Senior Coroner in providing a high quality coroner service that puts the bereaved at the heart of the process. The assistant coroner deputises for the senior coroner when the senior coroner is absent and works with the senior coroner to ensure that the day to day running of the jurisdiction takes place to the highest standard. This includes preparing for any significant emergencies which may occur and to be available to assist with 24 hour availability on a rota basis as well as holding regular team meetings and liaising with stakeholders. The assistant coroner will assist the senior coroner in submitting annual returns to the Chief Coroner and Lord Chancellor as and when required.

Assistant Coroner Role Responsibilities and Assessment criteria

Assimilating and clarifying information

As an assistant coroner you will be expected to be able to quickly assimilate information to identify essential issues, seeking clarification where necessary so a clear understanding of this information is gained. This will include possessing the ability to explain legal and medical terms to people from non-legal or non-medical backgrounds.

Assessment criteria

- 1. Excellent analytical skills and a consistency of decision-making and administrative direction.**

- 2. Experience of legal work in the coroner jurisdiction (e.g. representing clients at inquest).**
- 3. The ability to explain complex terms to those from non-legal or non-medical backgrounds.**

Managing work effectively

A large amount of coronial work takes place outside of the court setting and therefore Assistant coroners are expected to work effectively both in the office and whilst conducting court hearings. They will also assist the senior coroner in the management of work across the team as a whole. When sitting assistant coroners are required to run hearings efficiently to facilitate a fair conclusion, minimise delays and effectively deal with case management. Assistant coroners must respond calmly and flexibly to changing circumstances and prioritise work effectively to make the most of available resources whilst taking in to account any budgetary considerations as appropriate. Assistant coroners are committed to ensuring that any expenditure is reasonable and controlled and works to monitor this regularly with the senior coroner.

Assessment criteria:

- 4. An ability to prioritise work effectively to minimise delays.**
- 5. Able to work at speed and under pressure.**
- 6. Demonstrates resilience responding calmly and flexibly to changing circumstances.**

Working with others

An ability to work constructively with others whilst demonstrating an awareness of diversity and showing empathy and sensitivity in building relationships is required in this post. Assistant coroners must be able to constructively assist the senior coroner in leading members of the coronial team and interact well with bereaved families and external stakeholders (e.g. relatives, police officers, medical personnel, mortuary staff, Registrars, witnesses and the media). Where necessary they assist the senior coroner to engage with the local community, for example giving talks and seeking feedback and views.

Assessment criteria:

- 7. Must have knowledge of the extent to which cultural and religious requirements can be met within the constraints of coroner law and practice.**
- 8. An ability to drive the service and be receptive to new ideas, reforms and diverse needs.**
- 9. Treats people with respect, sensitivity and in a fair manner without discrimination; ensuring the requirements of those with differing needs are properly met.**

Communicating effectively

Assistant coroners must be excellent communicators and have the ability to express themselves clearly and authoritatively when required. They must be sensitive and, as far as possible, responsive to the needs and requirements of those who engage with the coroner service and also possess the awareness to manage their expectations of the coroner process. Assistant coroners must be IT literate and able to provide clear directions to staff on coroner investigations whilst creating a safe, harmonious and effective working environment

through cooperative working including supporting the senior coroner with holding team meetings.

Assessment Criteria:

- 10. Excellent verbal and written communication skills.**
- 11. Establishes authority and inspires respect and confidence.**
- 12. Remains calm and authoritative even when challenged.**

Exercising judgement

Assistant coroners must demonstrate integrity and apply independence of mind to make incisive, fair and legally sound decisions.

Assessment criteria

- 13. Able to deal with emotionally charged situations that require sensitive handling and confident/positive judgement.**
- 14. Experience of conducting investigative enquiries including demonstrating clarity of thought in identifying issues relevant to the investigation.**
- 15. Reaches clear, reasoned decisions objectively, based on relevant law and findings of fact.**

Possessing and Building Knowledge

It is the responsibility of the Assistant coroner to keep an up-to-date working knowledge of coroner law, practice and guidance. Coroners must undertake compulsory Judicial College and Chief Coroner training as appropriate. Assistant coroners are expected to take part in local training as and when required.

Assessment criteria:

- 16. All applicants must be a barrister or solicitor or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives and satisfy the judicial-appointment eligibility condition which includes a requirement for the candidate to hold a relevant qualification, to have also gained experience in the law for a total period of at least 5 years *whilst holding that qualification* and be under the age of 70: paragraph 3 of Schedule 3.**
- 17. Thorough, up to date knowledge of legislation, case law and guidance relating to coroner's duties.**
- 18. Knowledge of structures and procedures of the police, in particular those relating to the investigation of sudden or suspicious deaths.**
- 19. Knowledge of the organisational structures of local government including an understanding of the challenges facing local government, both at present and in the future.**

Desirable criteria:

- 20. Full current driving licence (unless disability precludes this) and use of a vehicle for work purposes.**

Previous Coroner Experience:

If you have worked or currently work as a coroner it is important that you detail your coroner experience. Please can you confirm in your application the following:

- (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 Jury inquests conducted.
- (h) experience of digital case management system.

4. SUMMARY OF TERMS & CONDITIONS OF THE ASSISTANT CORONER

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.

The following section contains some general terms and conditions in relation to this post, a full list of recommended terms and conditions is available upon request.

Salary

The annual salary for the post is at £416 day rate and £208 half day rate together with the provision of an out of hours service. The salary provision includes working on occasion out of hours on a rota basis.

Pension Scheme

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

Payment of expenses

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

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 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 this position, you are required to submit a CV, a full supporting statement of up to two sides of A4 (no smaller than font 11). It is important that your supporting statement fully addresses the assessment criteria detailed in **bold** in the job summary section above.

In particular please demonstrate how you meet the following criteria:

- 1. Assimilating and clarifying information**
- 2. Managing work efficiently**
- 3. Working with others**
- 4. Communicating effectively**
- 5. Exercising judgement**
- 6. Possessing and Building Knowledge**

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.

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.

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. All applicants will be required to complete a declaration form when they attend for interview.

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

Applicants must specify in their application if they are the subject of any complaint or disciplinary proceedings by any professional body to which they belong (including personal conduct referred to the Judicial Conduct Investigations Office), and clearly state the salary or fee payable. Applicants will also be asked in interview to declare anything about themselves including in their past that might be an embarrassment to the Local Authority, the Chief Coroner or the Lord Chancellor 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/>

Interview

You will be required to undertake a short presentation as part of the interview process. It is anticipated that the interviews will be conducted via video link.

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.

6. RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE

Closing date: Thursday 9th July 2020

Interview invitations will be sent out: Week commencing 13th July 2020

Interview date: Week commencing 20th July 2020

If you do not hear by Wednesday 15th July 2020, please assume you have not been shortlisted.

The interview panel will be:

**Susan Zeiss – Compliance Officer
Anne Pember – HM Senior Coroner
Andrew Cheyne – HR Business Partner**

We are aiming for the successful candidate to take up post on 1st September 2020.