

Candidate Information Pack

ASSISTANT CORONER

Liverpool & Wirral Coroner Area

Relevant Authority: Liverpool City Council

April 2021

ASSISTANT CORONER FOR LIVERPOOL & WIRRAL CORONER AREA 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 Liverpool & Wirral Coroner area

Salary – fee paid, £472 per day in line with the JNC Coroner’s Circular 63

Closing date: 31 May 2021

Liverpool & Wirral Coroner Area are seeking to appoint one Assistant Coroner to meet the needs of the coroner area. The appointment will be made by Liverpool City Council as the [relevant authority](#).

About the post:

Although prior experience as an Assistant Coroner is not essential, you will be required to demonstrate an understanding of the role. This is an opportunity for lawyers considering their first judicial appointment – existing holders of judicial office will not be preferred on that basis alone. You will also be required to demonstrate knowledge and experience of coronial law, knowledge of the Core Competencies for Assistant Coroners prescribed by the [Chief Coroner's Guidance No. 20](#), knowledge 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.

Successful applicants will be required to provide an out-of-hours service when either the Senior Coroner or Area Coroner is absent.

An Assistant Coroner is an independent judicial office holder, appointed by the relevant authority but is not an employee of the Council. Assistant Coroners deputise for the Senior Coroner covering the full range of duties and responsibilities in this complex area.

It is an Assistant 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 20 sitting days each financial year. However, it is recognised that there is a variance of workload in each area.

Who can apply:

The successful candidate will be a barrister or a solicitor or Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives and satisfy the judicial-appointment eligibility condition which means they will have 5 years of experience *whilst* holding that qualification. They will be under the age of 70 and be subject to the appointment and eligibility conditions within the [Coroners and Justice Act 2009 \(s.23 and Schedule 3\)](#).

Statutory terms of the appointment:

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.

How to apply:

The candidate pack is available here:

Suitably qualified applicants are requested to email their CV and supporting statement via [Current vacancies - Liverpool City Council](#)

Notification

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

2. CORONER SERVICE INFORMATION

The Coroner Area of Liverpool and Wirral is a large geographical area of 26,884 hectares with a population of 789,900. The area is part of the Liverpool City Region which is a world class centre of excellence in commerce, education and industry and as such the area has a significantly larger workforce than resident population.

The Area is a major transport hub with main arterial roads and motorways, John Lennon Airport, main line rail links (Lime Street & Birkenhead train stations), Mersey Tunnels, Mersey Ferry, Ports and an ocean liner terminal. There are three universities, two cathedrals, two large local prisons and a diverse multi-ethnic multicultural harmonious population.

The area is served by three large district general teaching hospitals and five tertiary centres of excellence, namely:

The Royal Liverpool University Hospital
Aintree University Hospital
Wirral University Teaching Hospital

There are five tertiary centres of healthcare excellence namely:

Liverpool Heart & Chest Hospital
Alder Hey Children's Hospital
Liverpool Women's Hospital
Clatterbridge Hospital
The Walton Centre for Neurology & Neurosurgery

There are also two adult and two children's hospices. There are mental health units with patients detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 and many care homes with patients authorised to reside under Mental Capacity Act safeguards.

The area has two premier league football teams, one football league football team and a championship golf course.

The Coroner's service and Court is at:

**Gerard Majella Courthouse
Boundary Street
Liverpool
L5 2QD**

The office operates for the public from 9.00am to 16.45pm Monday to Friday and the Court usually sits from 10.00am with the latest inquest being listed at 16.00pm. However coroner's clerks and coroner's investigation officers can work in the office from 7.30am to 18.30pm and occasionally at weekends.

Arrangements can be made to hold some inquests in the Wirral or at other venues subject to the need.

The Court and offices are dedicated to the Coroner's Service, however they are conveniently co-located with the Emergency Planning Team and the Child Death Overview panel. There are lawned areas, a garden, secure staff parking, public parking, a separate jury retiring building, the facility to run up to three courts, a vulnerable witness room, video-conferencing,

five advocate's conference/meeting rooms, a waiting room and an excellent Coroner's Court Support Service.

All coroner's support staff are located in the same building. There is an administrative team of four local authority officers led by the Chief Clerk and twelve Merseyside Police Coroner's Investigation Officers, with their own manager who are from time to time supplemented by serving police officers for investigative duties.

The Workload

There are approximately 3500 reported deaths each year. This results in over 800 inquests.

There is a high inquest rate for the number of deaths reported, however this is the result of a post-mortem examination rate of about 30% and average inquest conclusion time of less than 10 weeks from the death report. Up to 25% of inquests are concluded based on clinical history and exclusion of unnatural causes as opposed to invasive autopsy. This enables the limited resources to be targeted on those unnatural and state detention deaths which require the most investigation.

In Liverpool and Wirral all investigations directions are timetabled as to when evidence should be filed and dates are set, only by a coroner, as to when an investigation will be reviewed or an inquest opened and concluded.

Coroners

In the Liverpool & Wirral Coroner Area there is a Senior Coroner and Area Coroner, both full-time, and there are currently three Assistant Coroners who sit regularly.

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:

- To support the Senior Coroner in providing a high-quality coroner service that puts the bereaved at the heart of the process. This includes preparing for any significant emergencies which may occur and to be available to assist with 24-hour availability on a rota basis.

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 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 work constructively with 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. 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 process. Assistant Coroners must be IT literate and provide clear directions to staff on coroner investigations whilst creating a safe, harmonious and effective working environment through co-operative working.

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 also undertake compulsory Judicial College and Chief Coroner training as appropriate. Assistant Coroners should take part in any local training as appropriate. Assistant Coroners are expected to take part in the on-going yearly assistant coroner appraisal scheme to build upon their knowledge and skills.

Assessment criteria:

- 16. All applicants must be a barrister or solicitor or Fellow of the Chartered 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.

Further Liverpool City Council is looking to appoint the best candidate who can discharge the duties of office, without fear or favour, ill-will or affection according to the law – whilst demonstrating kindness, fairness, humility and compassion.

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*.

The following section contains some general terms and conditions in relation to this post, the specifics of such terms should be agreed between the coroner and the local authority. Some general headings of terms and conditions for coroner posts is available upon request.

Fee

The post is fee paid and the current fee is £472 per day, in line with the JNC Coroners Circular 63. The fee includes preparation for hearings and any post hearing duties

Pension Scheme

An Assistant Coroner may join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LPGS).

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. Assistant coroners should live within a reasonable commuting distance from the court or office in the area to which they are appointed. By the very nature of the position of assistant coroner deputising for the senior coroner, availability at short notice is preferable.

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 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, and a full supporting statement of up to two sides of A4 (no smaller than font 11) via [Current vacancies - Liverpool City Council](#). 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.

Chief Coroner's role in the process

All appointments are subject to the consent of the Chief Coroner and the Lord Chancellor. The interview panel may include a representative from the Chief Coroner's Office.

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

6. RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE

Closing date: 31 May 2021

Interview invitations will be sent out: w/c 21 June 2021

Interview date: Tuesday 6 July 2021 via MS Teams

If you do not hear by 21 June 2021, please assume you have not been shortlisted.

The interview panel will be:

Andre Rebello – HM Senior Coroner

Anita Bhardwaj – HM Area Coroner

Rachelle Nield – Coroner's Service Manager and Chief Clerk

Member of Legal Management Team – Liverpool City Council or Wirral Council

The interview panel may also include a representative from the Chief Coroner's Office as an observer.