

# Candidate Information Pack

## **ASSISTANT CORONER**

County Durham & Darlington Coroner Area

Relevant Authority:

Durham County Council

April 2026

**ASSISTANT CORONER FOR  
COUNTY DURHAM & DARLINGTON 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 County Durham & Darlington Coroner Area

**Salary – fee paid: £516.00 per day (Pay award pending)**

**Closing date: Sunday 3 May 2026**

Durham County Council is seeking to appoint 3 Assistant Coroners to support the Senior Coroner across the full range of coroner duties in order to deliver a high-quality coroner service to the people of County Durham & Darlington.

**Successful candidates will be required to attend a mandatory Assistant Coroner Induction training course on 1-2 December 2026 and a follow up course in June 2027 (date to be confirmed).**

#### **About the post:**

Durham 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. You will work closely with the Senior Coroner to ensure the running of an efficient Coroner service that puts the bereaved at the heart of its service.

You will be required to demonstrate knowledge and experience of Coroner law and have experience 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.

Assistant Coroners are required to sit a minimum of 20 days a year. These are fee paid positions although they are likely to involve a regular commitment, which is to be agreed between the Assistant Coroner, Senior Coroner and the local authority.

Applicants should complete an online application evidencing as appropriate the essential and desirable requirements for the post. In addition, you are required to declare if you are the subject of any complaint or disciplinary proceedings by any professional body to which you belong and which have been upheld, with particulars.

#### **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 5 years of experience *whilst* holding that qualification. They will be under the age of 75 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 75 years (compulsory retirement age) unless they choose to resign or are removed by the Lord Chief Justice or Lord Chancellor prior to their 75<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**How to apply:**

The candidate pack is available in the Supporting Documents section.

If you wish to have an informal discussion or arrange a visit, please Mr Jeremy Chipperfield at County Durham & Darlington Coroner Service on 03000 265556.

**Suitably qualified applicants are requested to email their CV and supporting statement demonstrating how they meet the criteria for the role (which should include disclosure of any convictions or disciplinary proceedings) to [PracticeManagement@durham.gov.uk](mailto:PracticeManagement@durham.gov.uk) stating ASSISTANT CORONER in the subject line.**

**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 County Durham & Darlington coroner area includes an area of 940 square miles with a current population of around 620,000. Bordering counties include: North Yorkshire, Cumbria, the Tees Valley and Tyne & Wear.

The number of deaths registered annually is around 7,310 with approximately 2,039 cases (28%) referred to the senior coroner in 2025. Post mortem examinations are conducted at 1 Hospital Trust by hospital pathologists in the mortuaries of Newcastle. An increasing proportion of PMEs are first receiving PMCT followed by autopsy or limited autopsy only as necessary. Durham and Darlington also benefit from the local specialisation of other areas of pathology. The ME system is running in acute hospitals and MEs meet regularly with our Senior Coroner. The coronial and ME teams will meet as a whole in the coming months.

The coroner area contains sections of the A1 (M) motorway as well as several major A-roads (A19, A66). It contains part of the East Coast mainline railway as well as several branch lines. The Durham and Darlington area is home to a number of correctional facilities within the North East prison estate. HM Prison Durham serves as a Category B reception prison, HM Prison Frankland is one of the UK's most secure Category A facilities, HM Prison Low Newton, serves as a closed female prison and Young Offender Institution (YOI) for the region as well as HM Prison Deerbolt operating as a Category C training prison and Young Offender Institution.

There are 2 acute hospitals, University Hospital North Durham and Darlington Memorial Hospital, well as several community hospitals.

### **Daily Operations and accommodation**

The service is located in dedicated accommodation, including offices and court in Crook Civic Centre. The coroner's court, which is next to 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 16 weeks.

The Senior Coroner, and six assistant coroners are supported by the Coroner Service Manager, ten coroner's officers, four Inquest & Support Officers as well as a Support Officer to the Senior Coroner. The Coroner Service Manager reports to the Practice Manager within Legal & Democratic Services, Durham County Council who is responsible for coroner's accommodation, contracts and procurement and finances.

All staff with the exception of the Practice Manager are co-located with the senior coroner.

The administrative support staff are responsible for answering incoming calls from the public on weekdays 8am – 5pm.

### 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 [and Area 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 [where appropriate] to be available to assist with 24-hour availability on a rota basis.

#### **Assistant Coroner Role Responsibilities and Assessment criteria**

As with other Judicial roles the Judicial Skills and Abilities Framework 2025 [JSAF 2025 230725](#) outlines the essential skills and competencies expected of judicial office holders, aiming to enhance recruitment and development processes within the judiciary. It will be helpful to read the as the JSAF has been drafted by judges, for judges and prospective judges to enable them to evidence their experience and suitability for judicial office. The JSAF highlights the key skills that all judicial office holders or prospective judicial office holders should demonstrate across their application or career.

The specific assessment criteria for coroners is set out below:

#### **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 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 75: 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.**

In relation to each competency, please provide specific, examples and instances which demonstrate the relevant competency. Generalised assertions, such as 'it is my practice to...' or 'I generally/always do x, y or z' or 'I have the following general skills' do not assist the sifting panel in determining if the competency has been met.

### **Desirable criteria:**

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

### **Other Judicial Appointments:**

Please include details of any other judicial appointments held.

#### **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.

##### **Fee**

The post is fee paid and the current fee is £516.00 per day (Pay award pending).

##### **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.

##### **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 3 months' 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 complete the relevant application form, 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.

In relation to each competency, please provide specific, examples and instances which demonstrate the relevant competency. Generalised assertions, such as 'it is my practice to...' or 'I generally/always do x, y or z' or 'I have the following general skills' do not assist the sifting panel in determining if the competency has been met.

### **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 in your application from the outset.

All applicants will be required to complete a declaration and undertaking 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).

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:

[Guide to Judicial Conduct – Revised July 2023 - Courts and Tribunals Judiciary](#)

### **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.

## **Interview**

You will be required to undertake a short presentation as part of the interview process. You will be given a short brief and allowed **30 minutes to prepare a presentation lasting 5 to 10 minutes**, (this will take the form of a decision, being delivered in court and may be different as between experienced coroners and those not currently holding coronial appointment).

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

All appointments are subject to the consent of the Chief Coroner and the Lord Chancellor.

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

## **6. RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE**

Suitably qualified applicants are requested complete the online application form and email their CV and their supporting statement to: [PracticeManagement@durham.gov.uk](mailto:PracticeManagement@durham.gov.uk) stating ASSISTANT CORONER in the subject line.

**Closing date: Sunday 3 May 2026**

**Sift return date: Friday 8 May 2026**

**Interview invitations will be sent out: w/c Monday 25 May 2026**

**Interview date: w/c Monday 8 June 2026**

**If you do not hear by Monday 8 June 2026, please assume you have not been shortlisted.**

**The interview panel will be:**

**Jeremy Chipperfield – Senior Coroner, County Durham & Darlington  
Representative of Durham County Council  
Representative of Darlington Borough Council**

**We are aiming for the successful candidate to take up post as soon as is reasonably practicable, and subject to any requirement to attend the mandatory Assistant Coroner induction course on 1-2 December 2026 with a follow up course in June 2027 (date to be confirmed).**