



What is an Inquest?

In some circumstances, the Coroner is obliged by law to hold an inquest. This will be the case if the death is unnatural, for example:- has arisen from injury, accident, poisoning, industrial disease or where a person has died in custody or appears to have taken their own life. An inquest is a formal court hearing, open to members of the public and the media. If appropriate, witnesses will be called and in some cases a jury will be appointed. In these circumstances the Coroner's Officer will explain the procedures in more detail.

Will I have to attend the inquest?

It is possible that you may be asked to attend the inquest but in some circumstances documentary evidence can be accepted instead of attendance in court.

Will I need to register the death after the inquest?

If an inquest is held the Coroner will register the death on your behalf. The Registrar will write to you when this has been done and explain how you can obtain a registrars death certificate.

Further help and support

There are many organisations who give support to the bereaved. The following list is not exhaustive but may be useful.

Cruse Bereavement Support National Helpline
Tel: 0808 808 1677 or 01473 230888
www.cruse.org.uk

The Samaritans 116 123

The Compassionate Friends (for the loss of a child)
Tel: 0845 1232304

HOPE (Survivors of the bereaved by suicide)
Tel: 07531 087623

HM Senior Coroner for Suffolk
Mr Nigel Parsley LLM,DipFHID
Phone: 0345 607 2040
Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4pm
E-mail: Coroners.service@suffolk.gov.uk



Deaths referred to the Coroner

For the latest information
visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/coroners



We understand that the death of a loved one is a very difficult time. Please accept our condolences on your loss. This leaflet has been prepared to help explain the role of the Coroner and the investigation process.

Who is the Coroner?

Coroners are independent judicial officers who will enquire into the circumstances of deaths reported to them and make appropriate findings about how the person died. The Coroner is supported by Coroner's Officers who make enquiries and liaise with bereaved families, police, doctors and funeral directors.

The offices and court rooms are based in Ipswich at Beacon House, Whitehouse Road, Ipswich IP1 5PB
Telephone 0345 607 2040 Or email
Coroners.service@suffolk.gov.uk

Please be aware that the office is not open over the weekend or on bank holidays. The attending police officer will send your contact details to the Coroner's Office, who will make contact with you as soon as they can to explain what needs to happen next.

What happens to the deceased?

The Coroner's Ambulance will take the deceased to the hospital mortuary, or in some cases to their own chapel of rest. You will be advised by the ambulance staff which location is being used.

When does a death have to be referred to the Coroner?

- > Where the doctor has not seen the patient within the past 28 days or after the death.
- > When the death happened during or following a medical procedure in hospital.
- > When the death is as a result of homicide, suicide, accident, industrial disease or any other unnatural cause.
- > When there are real grounds for believing that neglect contributed to the death.
- > When the death has happened in prison, in police custody or whilst the deceased was detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act.
- > Where the cause of death is not known or there are any other circumstances which justify an investigation by the Coroner.

What will the Coroner do?

The Coroner has a legal obligation to be involved in cases where the circumstances above apply, or where a doctor is not able to issue a valid, 'medical certificate of cause of death'.

Once a referral has been made or a police report submitted, the Coroner will commence an investigation into the circumstances of the death. This is likely to include reviewing medical reports, obtaining witness statements, carrying out identity checks and in some situations asking for a post mortem examination.

In many cases the Coroner will determine that death was as a result of natural causes and you will not be unduly delayed in registering the death and making funeral arrangements.

The Coroners officers will liaise with you throughout the investigation to keep you updated and explain the likely timescales.

When can I appoint a funeral director?

You may appoint a funeral director whenever you feel ready to do so. Please advise them that the Coroner's service is involved in the circumstances.

When can the funeral take place?

If an inquest is not needed, a burial or cremation can be arranged straight away and the appropriate paperwork will be issued by the Coroner. If, however, an inquest is necessary, the Coroner will normally release the deceased for burial or cremation as soon as the inquest has been opened.

The Coroner's Officer will tell you when this will happen.

Can the body be viewed?

In most cases this can be arranged by calling the hospital mortuary during normal working hours:-

Ipswich Hospital, Heath Road, Ipswich 01473 712233
West Suffolk Hospital, Bury St Edmunds 01284 713000
James Paget Hospital, Gorleston 01493 452452

Occasionally you or someone else may be required to formally identify the deceased.

What happens next?

This will depend on the circumstances and the outcome of the Coroner's investigations. In most cases the Coroner will authorise the registration of the death following a post mortem or other enquiries. Once authorisation has been given you will be asked to make an appointment to register the death with the Suffolk Registration service.

(www.suffolk.gov.uk/registrars or 0345 607 2050)

In some cases authorisation will not be given by the Coroner as an inquest may be necessary. If this is the case, registration of the death will be deferred but funeral arrangements can usually proceed with minimal delay.