



Investigation

Your Guide



What is a coroner's investigation?

Coroners do not investigate every death - for the most part they investigate deaths which are unnatural, where the cause of death is unknown, or where the death has occurred violently (such as in a road traffic accident, or when someone dies after being injured in a fall).

The fact that the coroner is investigating does not mean that there is suspicion of a criminal act or of any wrongdoing. Its main purpose is to establish who has died, when and where they died, and how they died. The coroner carries out an investigation of the circumstances of the death - not of how someone reached that point in their life.

The coroner will decide what evidence they need to determine the answers to these questions ('who died, when, where and how'), and will then ask their officers to obtain that evidence from witnesses who knew the deceased or who were involved at the time of their death.

Will there be an inquest after the investigation?

An inquest is a fact-finding court hearing which is open to the public (a separate information sheet is available which explains more about the inquest process). An investigation may or may not end with an inquest.

- There will be an inquest if the evidence that has been gathered during the investigation shows that the death was unnatural or violent, or if the cause of death remains unknown
- On the other hand, there will not be an inquest if, for example, evidence from a post-mortem investigation shows that there was in fact a natural cause of death and there are no other concerns about how the person died.

More information

If you would like more information about any part of the inquest process, then a good place to start is the '[Guide to coroner services for bereaved people](#)' produced by the Ministry of Justice. Our website is also available at avon-coroner.com

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU KNOW SOMETHING THAT RELATES TO THE DEATH?

If you believe you have evidence that relates to a death that the coroner is investigating, please inform the coroner's office as soon as possible: the coroner will then decide if it is relevant and whether evidence needs to be obtained.

WILL YOU KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON DURING THE INVESTIGATION?

If you are an 'interested person' (often this will mean that you are the family and/or next of kin of the person who has died) then the coroner's office will keep you informed about the progress of the investigation. The office will:

- Explain the coroner's role and answer any questions you have about the investigation process
- Let you know when and where any court hearings will take place
 - Give you documents and evidence that has been gathered during the investigation (where possible)
- Keep you updated about the progress of the case.