

# Read-only Inquests

Your Guide

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## What is a 'read only' / 'documentary' inquest?

You have been given this information sheet because the coroner is planning to hold a 'read only' inquest (also sometimes called a 'documentary' inquest).

An inquest is a fact finding court hearing which is open to the public and the press: it is different to most other types of court hearing because there is no prosecution or defence, and only the coroner can decide what evidence is required.

A 'read only' or 'documentary' inquest is a specific type of inquest where none of the witnesses come to court to give evidence in person.

Instead, the evidence and the witness statements are read aloud (or summarised) in court and the coroner will then record the details of the person who has died, as well as formally confirming when, where, and how they came by their death.

This type of inquest usually happens when the coroner considers that there is no dispute about the key issues that they have to determine.

*NOTE: In a 'read only' inquest there is no opportunity to ask any of the witnesses questions, because they will not be there to answer them.*

## ATTENDANCE

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### DO YOU HAVE TO COME TO COURT YOURSELF FOR THE INQUEST?

You do not need to come to court for the inquest - it is entirely your decision whether to do so or not and there is no pressure on you to attend.

If you do come to court but you want to leave the courtroom during the hearing, then you can do so at any time.

### IF I DON'T COME TO COURT, HOW WILL I FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED?

Whether you attend court or not you will be sent a copy of the 'Record of Inquest' after the hearing, and this will inform you of the coroner's findings and conclusion, it will also provide you with information about how to obtain a final death certificate.

# What should you do if you have questions for one or more of the witnesses?

If you do have questions for any of the witnesses, or if you think that there is important evidence that the coroner is not aware of, then please notify the coroner's office as soon as possible so that your questions and concerns can be considered by the coroner. The coroner will consider your questions and then will make a decision as to whether the questions are relevant for the purpose of the inquest. The coroner will then decide to either continue with the 'read only' inquest or adjourn the hearing and obtain more evidence and re-list the inquest potentially with witnesses being called. This decision is a matter for the coroner.

## 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](http://avon-coroner.com)

