

The Coroners' Courts Support Service is a Registered Charity whose volunteers give emotional and practical support to families and other witnesses attending an Inquest. As a charity we are dependant on donations to run the Service and we are always very grateful for any contribution.

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The CCSS is dedicated to all those who have died in unusual or violent circumstances especially David Whyte who was tragically killed in a car accident aged twenty four.

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The Coroners' Courts  
Support Service

# Information on attending an Inquest at a Coroner's Court

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Coroners' Courts Support Service Ltd.  
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## The Coroners' Courts Support Service

Our volunteers give emotional and practical support to families and other witnesses attending an Inquest.

We hope this leaflet will explain what happens if you are asked to attend an Inquest at a Coroner's Court.

## What happens at a Coroner's Court?

An Inquest is to determine how, when and where the individual died, but not why. It is an enquiry to ascertain the facts concerning a death and does not apportion blame on any individual.

Coroners are Judicial Officers responsible for making enquiries into violent, unnatural or sudden deaths where the cause is unknown.

A Coroner's Officer is responsible for investigating the cause of the death and presenting the evidence in Court on the day of the Inquest.

A Coroner may hold an Inquest with a Jury in certain circumstances. To put it simply, these are deaths in prison, deaths in industrial accidents, deaths which are prejudicial to the health and safety of the public and deaths in Police custody or resulting from an injury caused by a Police Officer.

A Jury is comprised of between 7 and 11 members of the public. It is the Coroner's duty to direct the Jury on the law and sum up the evidence.

## Who may be attending the Inquest?

Family and other relatives, friends and witnesses who may include doctors, nurses, pathologists and representatives from the Police, Ambulance Service and Fire Brigade.

## What happens during an Inquest?

The Coroner, who is a lawyer, a doctor or both, will hear all the evidence that the Coroner's Officer presents to him/her. The Coroner will call individual witnesses and will question them on their statements taken at the time of the death. He/she may also ask a member of the family to give a little background information on their relative. After each witness has given their evidence, the family have the opportunity to question them. If the witness has not been asked to attend Court in person then the evidence may be read from a document. This is known as documentary evidence. At the end of the Inquest, the Coroner will give his/her verdict, which will be entered onto the final Death Certificate by the Registrar.

After the Inquest has concluded, the Coroner's Officer will explain the procedure that should be followed in order to obtain the Death Certificate

## What will happen when you arrive at Court on the day of the Inquest?

The CCSS will be there to give you practical and emotional support whilst you are at the Court. If possible, the volunteer will take you into the Court before proceedings start and explain how an Inquest is conducted and the lay out of the Court. The Inquest and all proceedings before the Coroner are held in an open Court and you should not be surprised to find members of the public and press there as they cannot be excluded. The press may ask the family for a statement or an interview after the Inquest has finished. There is no necessity to give this unless you so wish.

Should you become upset and wish to leave the Court during the proceedings, the CCSS will accompany you.

## After the Inquest

If you would like to obtain further help the CCSS have a list of bereavement agencies. Please ask the volunteer for details.

The Service works under strict guidelines of confidentiality and Equal Opportunities.