

### What is an inquest?

An inquest is an inquiry into who has died and how, when and where the death occurred. An inquest is not a trial; the Coroner must not blame anyone for the death.

An inquest is usually opened primarily to record that a death has occurred and to identify the dead person. It will then be adjourned until any police enquiries and the Coroner's investigations are completed. The full inquest can then be resumed.

### Attendance at an inquest

When the Coroner's investigations are complete, a date for the resumed inquest is set and the people entitled to be notified will be told, if their details are known to the Coroner. Inquests are open to the public and journalists are usually present.

### Witnesses called to give evidence

Coroners decide who should give evidence as a witness. Anyone who believes they may help, can offer to give evidence by informing the Coroner. Anyone who believes a particular witness should be called, should inform the Coroner.

Witnesses can be compelled to attend.

### Inquests with a Jury

The inquest will be held with a jury if the death occurs in prison, in custody, at work or if further deaths may occur in similar circumstances. In these cases, the Coroner decides matters of law and the jury decides the verdict.

### Questioning of witnesses

Inquests do not determine blame and the verdict must not identify someone as having criminal or civil liability. Possible verdicts include: natural causes, accident, suicide, unlawful or lawful killing, industrial disease, and open verdicts (where there is insufficient evidence for any other verdict).

The Coroner may also report the death to any appropriate person or authority, if action is needed to prevent more deaths in similar circumstances.

### Portsmouth and South East Hampshire

Coroner: David Horsley Telephone: [Code A](tel:01323333333) Email: [Code A](mailto:codea@portsmouth.gov.uk)

Area covered:

Portsmouth, Havant, Fareham, Gosport, Petersfield Deputy: Robert Edward Stone Address: Coroner's Office Room T20 The Guildhall Guildhall Square Portsmouth PO1 1AJ

Last Updated: Tuesday, 6 November 2007, 15:22 GMT Coroners Bill dropped from plans

Plans to introduce a bill to give people more power to appeal against coroners' decisions has been dropped from the Queen's Speech programme.

The Ministry of Justice said the bill, which would also have established a new chief coroner post, would not be introduced this parliamentary session.

The measure would have granted "new powers" for coroners to conduct "more effective investigations".

The government says it is still committed to coroner reform.

The bill would have applied to England and Wales and was included in the draft legislative programme set out by Prime Minister Gordon Brown in July.