

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Coroner's Officer (2 posts)
Service: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Coroner Service
Directorate: Economy, Transport & Environment
Reports to: Coroner Service Manager
Grade: 6 / SO1
Location: Lawrence Court, Huntingdon
Hours: 37 Hours (Monday to Friday)

Job Purpose:

To provide support to the Coroner in order that the necessary action can be taken in the event of sudden or unexplained deaths, in particular:

- providing effective communication between bereaved families, the Coroner and the police
- managing the investigation process for each reported death, from initial assessment and recording, through detailed investigation, to arrangement and completion of inquests, including arranging and where necessary attending post mortems
- investigating deaths to provide and collate witness and other information to enable Coroners to make decisions

Principal Accountabilities:

1 Case Management

Coordinate and manage personal workload of assigned cases, managing the process from reporting receipt through to closure, generating and distributing appropriate accurate and complete paperwork at all stages, and monitoring/reporting progress to ensure timely completion of all cases

2 Investigation of Deaths

- Obtain pertinent information from relevant witnesses in circumstances of sudden or unexplained deaths reported to the Police or Coroner.
- Check/clarify with Doctors as to the possibility of a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD certificate) being issued, and/or agree actions with the Coroner for further investigations or other necessary activity.
- Arrange for relevant individuals to identify bodies, attend the identification process if required, and provide support as appropriate to bereaved families.
- Arrange a post mortem examination if required (and attend if necessary).

3. Relationship Management

- Provide advice and guidance to relatives, doctors, funeral directors, Medical Examiners and other interested parties to ensure that the role of the Coroner is understood, and correct procedures relating to the Coroner's enquiry are followed.
- Ensure that all relevant persons are advised of a sudden or unexplained death e.g. relevant Inspectorates, DSS, Embassies, so that they can meet their obligations and provide the Coroner and Police with the information required.

- Maintain effective communication with all interested parties, in particular:
 - help them understand the cause of death of the deceased person;
 - explain, where relevant and on request, why the coroner intends to take no further action in a particular case;
 - inform people of their rights and responsibilities;
 - take account where possible of individual wishes, feelings and expectations, including family and community preferences, traditions and religious requirements relating to mourning, post-mortem examinations and to funerals;
 - unless otherwise requested, contact bereaved people and others involved in the investigation at least every two months to inform them of the stage of the case, and explain reasons for any delays;
 - have respect for individual and family privacy and sensitivities;
 - provide a welcoming, safe and engaging environment;
 - treat everyone with fairness, respect, dignity and sensitivity;
 - treat children and young people involved in an investigation in a way and manner appropriate to their age;
 - make reasonable adjustments, where possible, to accommodate the needs of those with disabilities; help people to find further help where this is needed;
 - provide information about how to make a complaint about the Coroner Service

4 Inquest Management

- If an inquest is necessary, obtain the necessary evidence required by the Coroner to enable them to discharge their duties, including obtaining statements from witnesses, collating police statements and medical reports and reports from other departments, to explain the Who, When, Where and How requirements of the Coronial function.
- Prepare the file for the Coroner and arrange inquests, including venue, warning of witnesses, informing relatives and interested parties and summoning a jury, if required.
- Attend inquests to maintain relevant processes so that the inquest complies with statutory provisions and requirements of the Coroner and to ensure the smooth running of the inquest, including swearing in of witnesses (including working co-operatively with volunteers from the Coroners Support Service for witness and family care).
- Ensure witnesses and jurors at inquests are aware of procedures for payments of expenses as per Home Office Fees and Allowances.
- Provide support to relatives and advise them and other witnesses on procedures in the Coroner's Court. Provide advice on action following inquest i.e. obtaining Death Certificate and appeal procedure.

5 Data Management

- Maintain timely, accurate and complete computerised records relating to each death reported.

6 Human Tissue Act

- Ensure that the Human Tissue Act is adhered to in accordance with local Coronial practise.
- Attend Forensic and suspicious death post mortems to ensure that the Coroners needs are met.

7 General

- Contribute to the continued development and wellbeing of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Coroner Service (and associated Registration Services) through promoting and practising effective teamwork and identifying and implementing continuous improvement opportunities
- Support and mentor colleagues as required
- Undertake relevant additional duties as assigned

PERSON SPECIFICATION

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The following criteria are appropriate for this post. You must meet the essential criteria in order to be shortlisted for the post and it would be advantageous if you meet the desirable criteria.

Education, Qualifications & Training

Essential:

- Key Skill Level 2: 5 GCSEs at Grade C or above; or NVQ level 2 (or equivalent), including Maths, English and Science

Desirable:

- Key Skill Level 3: 2 'A' levels (4 AS Levels), ONC, OND, BTEC, NVQ level 3 or equivalent.

Knowledge & Experience

Essential:

- General knowledge/understanding of/interest in the role of the Coroner's officer
- Confident understanding and practical experience of dealing with the general public in a customer service environment
- Confident user of computers and office software, including Internet Explorer and Microsoft Office
- A willingness to develop and maintain broad and deep applied knowledge of relevant aspects of coronial law and practice, reinforced by participating and experiencing delivery of broader coronial services
- Practical understanding of office administrative processes and practices
- A sound understanding of how different organisations function, and experience of dealing professionally with a variety of people at different levels within different organisations
- Ability to demonstrate a calm and confident verbal delivery, and the ability to be authoritative and articulate in addressing large groups of people
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the requirement for confidentiality

Desirable:

- Confident understanding and practical experience of mentoring less experienced colleagues
- Detailed/In-depth and current practical knowledge & understanding of the Coroners Service
- Completion of courses relevant to Coroners processes and procedures (e.g. Law based courses or qualifications)
- Ability to identify and promote opportunities for partnership working that improve efficiency and services to the bereaved

Skills & Attributes

Essential:

- Ability to manage time effectively, to co-ordinate and progress a personal workload assigned by the line manager by prioritising tasks to be carried out, proposing alternatives to balance distribution of workload, monitoring progress, and contribute to the effective running of the office and the service provided to the Coroner and Customers
- Confident user of computers and office software, including Internet Explorer and Microsoft Office
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, and the ability to use variety of styles and tones to suit different audiences. Includes attention to detail, and accuracy with good spelling and neat, legible handwriting
- Ability to influence partner agencies to take early action to facilitate progress
- Comprehensive investigative skills utilising a questioning and enquiring approach to establish the full range of information, and ability to identify deaths that need further investigation by police officers.
- Ability to deal with death and bereaved relatives/friends in various emotional states from various backgrounds and advise them on relevant procedures
- Able to deliver difficult information sensitively whilst meeting the expectations of the bereaved.
- Able to work effectively across services as a team member; values, calls upon and utilises the expertise of colleagues, willingly learns from other team members
- Ability to work autonomously under pressure in stressful situations, and ability to identify what needs to be escalated to the manager
- Ability to be professionally dissociated from the emotional aspects of dealing with death on a daily basis, while remaining sensitive and responsive to bereaved families

Desirable:

- Ability to identify and promote opportunities for partnership working that improve efficiency and services to the bereaved
- Commitment to ongoing personal and professional/role development
- Understanding of service development, working with and supporting management to continually develop and improve the service

Cambridgeshire Behaviours

Essential:

- Establish credibility and work co-operatively with colleagues and customers
- Maintain good practice as well as making future improvements
- Make decisions without bias
- Explain clearly to colleagues and customers how these decisions will impact on service delivery
- Be aware of the positive and negative impact you can and could make on colleagues and customers
- Be considerate when using and working with council resources, and take responsibility for managing them
- Logically identify the best approach in continuing to meet objectives and deliver excellent outcomes
- Plan and anticipate changes in working practices, and embrace such changes in a positive way

Special Requirements

Essential:

- To be able to ensure as smooth a passage as possible, for the next of kin, and other interested parties,

through the complexities and emotional turmoil of the Coroner's investigation.

- Able to deal with death on a daily basis, not least because of the emotional aspect that comes with dealing with the bereaved.
- Ability to view deceased persons, and photographs of deceased persons, whose cause of death may have been violent, e.g. murder, suicide, road traffic accidents. Be able to attend post mortem examinations on behalf of HM Coroner. Post holders need to be aware of, and able to cope with this requirement.
- Ability to travel independently throughout the county
- Willingness to operate outside normal office hours (including late nights) on occasions
- High standard of personal presentation