

Jury Inquests

Your Guide



When does an inquest take place with a jury?

Most inquests are held without a jury, but there are times when the law says that a jury must be called. These include:

- If the death happened in prison, in police custody, or in another type of state detention (except if the death was from natural causes);
- If the death resulted from an accident at work; or
- If the senior coroner thinks that there is sufficient reason for calling a jury in a particular case.

What does a jury do?

When an inquest is heard with a jury, there is a division between the role of the coroner and the role of the jury. The coroner will still make all of the procedural and legal decisions (including decisions about what evidence should be heard at the inquest), and will still ask the majority of the questions when witnesses give evidence in court. The jury's primary functions are:

- Ask relevant questions of witnesses to clarify the evidence
- Decide the facts of the case
- Record the medical cause of death
- Indicate how the person died
- Agree on a formal 'conclusion'

The jury cannot blame someone for the death, and it cannot determine questions of civil or criminal liability.

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

WHO ARE THE PEOPLE IN THE JURY?

Jurors are members of the public who are chosen at random from the electoral register and called to court. Often potential jurors will be asked questions before the inquest starts to make sure that they are impartial and able to hear the evidence fairly (for instance, if the death took place in a prison, the potential jury might be asked questions to check that none of them work as a prison guard).

WHAT IS AN 'ARTICLE 2' CASE?

Sometimes the cases that are heard by a jury are 'Article 2' cases. Under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the state has an obligation to protect the lives of all of its citizens. If a death occurs in circumstances where the state might not have met those obligations, then the inquest may become what is known as an 'Article 2' inquest. This means that the inquest process will look at evidence about a wider range of factual circumstances than it might do otherwise.