



February 2021

APPLICANT INFORMATION PACK

Dear Candidate

Reference your application for post of Coroners Investigation Officer (CIO)

Thank you for your interest in this challenging but rewarding role. The successful candidates will be offered a position, ensuring the right skills, experience and knowledge mix exist in the team.

IMPORTANT NOTE to candidates BEFORE making an application:

- You must provide all relevant information in the online application itself, a CV is not required for this position and will NOT be reviewed as part of the selection process.
- You must list a full employment history and explain all gaps in employment.
- Please list the qualifications, listing the highest first: provide the level of qualification; name of subject; the grade and year of achievement. For example BSc(Hons) Forensic Science (2:1); HND Bio-medical Science (distinction) (2017); GCSE (O-level) English Literature (C) (2017)
- **Refer to the person specification and use the 'reason for application' to demonstrate how your past experience, knowledge or skills and achievements will transfer to the position you are applying for, please provide examples.**

Shortlisting

A scoring matrix is used to identify those candidates that demonstrate through the online application form how they meet the selection criteria for the role and the successful applicants will be invited for an on-line assessment, assessment day and or interview. Please make a diary note of the date(s) of the assessment day if given in the advert.

The Interview

Where an assessment day is held, candidates that are successful will be informed asap after the end of the day itself and invited for interview. Please make a diary note of the interview date(s) if provided. The successful candidates will be advised in writing asap after the last interview. You may ask for feedback after the decision has been made.

Further Information

Below is some background information which may assist you in deciding if the role is for you. All information is provided in good faith to assist candidates, but Terms and Conditions of appointment are specified by the Kent Scheme (Blue Book) and the Contract of Employment and candidates are advised to satisfy themselves of details of appointment and not to rely on the information provided below. Broad details on the terms and conditions of working for KCC are available by following this link: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/jobs/careers-with-us/working-for-us>. In the event that you are successful and are offered a position you can of course ask us to provide you with any additional information to assist you to decide if the role and terms of appointment are right for you.

The role of the Coroner's Investigation Officer (CIO)

The position of Coroners Investigation Officer is extremely rewarding but also very challenging. The work is continuous, largely unpredictable and subject to competing demands with the need to constantly re-prioritise, so you will be resilient and composed when working under pressure. You will work under judicial direction of the coroner and within statutory frameworks, national and local policy and procedural guidelines to provide sufficient evidence to enable coroners to fulfil their judicial function but you will be required to use your initiative to make all relevant enquiries, be able to apply methodical questioning and synthesise information to produce a case report for the coroner. At the same time, you will work closely with bereaved people performing a family liaison role with a calm, ethical and empathic approach, at what may be a difficult and distressing time, ensuring they are kept informed and regularly updated, throughout the process.

Once trained the CIO is responsible for the progress of their own caseload under the judicial direction of the coroner within statutory and locally set time limits. You will also be required to progress your colleagues cases when they are absent and support and mentor less experienced colleagues as appropriate.

The CIO conducts the investigation into any death reported to the coroner under explicit or implicit judicial direction from the coroner. The Coroners Court Officer (CCO) performs all case related administration and oversees all matters relating to court hearings. The Coroners Administration Officer (CAO) supports the workflow and deals with all non-case specific administration. The Coroners Court Usher (CCU) is based at the court venues and attends and manages all inquest hearings. On a day to day basis the CIO, CCO and CAO will work collaboratively to ensure seamless progression of a cases reported to the Coroner Service. The CIO being the case officer may occasionally be required to attend some inquest hearings (for example Pre-Inquest Reviews) but generally court ushers perform the court duties.

The CIO role is generally and **primarily office based** with most enquiries being dealt with by telephone and e-mail. However, CIOs must attend, of their own accord, and often on an unexpected basis, the mortuary in a timely manner, to conduct identifications on a regular basis. The mortuary sites are based across Kent, including (but not limited to) Dartford, Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone, Gillingham, Ashford, Margate, Canterbury and occasionally Greenwich or Brighton public mortuaries and Great Ormond Street or St Thomas's Hospital mortuaries in London. CIOs are also required to attend on a regular basis, forensic post-mortem examinations as appropriate. Once trained and as directed by the coroner, CIOs will be required to attend, of their own accord, such places as necessary to conduct enquiries for the purpose of the coroners' investigation such as obtaining photographs, statements from witnesses and in some exceptional circumstances may include scenes of death. Currently CIOs do not attend scenes of death.

An investigation is likely to involve obtaining statements from witnesses, the examination of a deceased person either at a mortuary or potentially at a scene of death as well as search for and retrieve and record evidence on behalf of the coroner, ensuring all evidence obtained is appropriately safeguarded, currently these duties are performed by police on behalf of the coroner. Attendance at the mortuary (or exceptionally scene of death) can be required on an unexpected and urgent basis both during working hours, and out of hours, out of hours being any time from 5pm to 9am seven days per week including bank holidays, and is required in a timely manner. It is likely that a CIO out of hour's duty-rota will be introduced and all CIOs will participate once trained.

There are 4 distinct coroner areas each with a senior coroner who is an independent judicial officer and not a KCC employee. You will deal with work from any of the four areas as directed by your manager and subject to business need. However all judicial decisions regarding the progress of case work is under the explicit or implicit direction of the coroner.

Patricia Harding is the Senior Coroner for three of the four coroner areas: Central & South East Kent; Mid Kent & Medway; and North East Kent. Roger Hatch is the Senior Coroner for North West Kent.

A summary of the key duties (but not limited to) is provided at the end of this document

Employment with Kent County Council (KCC)

The CIO is employed under the Kent Scheme which specifies the terms and conditions (T&Cs) (*The Blue Book*). Please note that some T&Cs in the Blue Book do not apply to the Coroner Service, most notably the KCC flexi-time does not operate in the Coroner Service Team. The role is primarily office based and home working is not routinely possible.

All Coroner Service Team members are subject to the Kent Code and are required to demonstrate KCC Values and Behaviours at all times. As the role is public facing, there is an acceptable dress policy and as the role requires attendance at the mortuary, an Immunisation Policy applies.

The CIO post is KCC grade KR8 with an annual salary of £25,692 to £29,299 (at 1st April 2020). All new KCC appointments are made at £25,692. The annual pay increase is subject to a Total Contribution Pay (TCP) award and not incremental points on a scale. You have the opportunity to progress through your grade under the TCP process. Your manager will have regular 1-2-1s with you throughout the year. It is the manager's responsibility to recommend a TCP assessment rating as part of the appraisal cycle. There are four ratings and each one equates to a percentage pay increase.

In order to develop a healthy work-life balance, KCC provides paid annual leave (the leave period operates from 1st April). CIOs are entitled to 27 days annual leave (per full year) rising to 30 days after five years service. Actual leave entitlement is calculated by the number of whole months worked. Leave is generally agreed on a first come first served basis, however in the interests of fairness, this may not always be the case. All leave must be approved in advance and you should not assume that leave will be agreed when making holiday arrangements. Leave will only be agreed where the operational delivery of the service can be maintained, so there will be a limit to the numbers of CIOs who may be off at any particular time. At certain times leave may be restricted for example immediately before or following bank holidays, during periods of training or exceptional staffing pressures. For new appointees, pre-existing leave arrangements will be accommodated wherever possible on production of confirmation of a pre-existing holiday booking.

Additionally KCC grants an additional day leave over the xmas period (the KCC day) however this is a normal working day for the Coroner Service Team. Staff that work the designated KCC day will be granted an additional day leave which will be taken at a suitable time as agreed with their manager and subject to business need but before 31st March or exceptionally may be paid.

All new appointments to KCC are subject to receipt of two satisfactory references and are subject to successful completion of a six month probationary period. You will meet regularly with your line manager to support your training and progress through probation. The contractual notice period for this role is one month.

Staffing Structure

The KCC Coroner Service Team sits within the Public Protection (PP) Unit, the Head of which is Mike Overbeke. PP sits within the Growth Environment and Enforcement (GT-EPE) Directorate, the interim Director is Stephanie Holt-Castle.

The Coroner Service Team is one team and CIOs are line managed by a KCC Coroners Office Manager. Coroners have no line management responsibilities for KCC staff.

The current staffing structure consists of:

23 coroners investigation officers	8 coroners court officers
a pool of 'as and when' coroners court ushers	1 coroners court supervisor
4 coroners office managers	0.4 FTE budget and contract officer
*4 coroners administration officers (*pilot role)	head of service

Work-base

Although your work-base is Maidstone, subject to business need you may be asked to work from any KCC building or other site and exceptionally you may be required to work from home. There is a requirement for all CIOs to be able to travel across Kent and Medway and possibly outside Kent to attend mortuaries particularly. Given the nature of the tasks it is imperative that attendance is achieved in a quick and timely manner. Attendance can be required both in an out of normal office hours, that is any time from 5pm to 9am, on any day. If exceptionally you are asked to attend a scene, the location may not be easily accessible, for example across a ploughed field, on uneven surfaces, down a railway embankment or cliff face or in a difficult to access place within a building. In light of these requirements, and the need for any evidence obtained to be appropriately safeguarded, travel and accessibility by means of public transport is likely to be inappropriate. Car mileage allowance and other approved expenses for all work related journeys in excess of the usual travel to and from work is paid at the rate in place at the time (KCC Blue Book). Please note that KCC does not provide staff car parking.

Office Hours

The offices operate Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm, to reflect the operational needs of our service delivery and the expectations of the bereaved families in Kent & Medway. The role is full time and KCC flexitime is not available. This is for continuity of contact with families particularly, but additionally because the progress of a case is not a linear process. The CIO becomes the designated case officer once allocated a case to maintain the oversight in order that cases are progressed in a timely and efficient manner to meet statutory requirements and timeframes and is in line with guidance issued by the first chief coroner.

Normal office hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm with 36 mins (unpaid) lunch each day (between 12 and 2pm) however subject to business need we may ask staff to work their hours between 8am and 6pm, or ask staff to work additional hours.

Although the Coroner Service Team do not work KCC flexi-time, we do try to work flexibly with staff to, for example accommodate appointments during the working day etc. On the occasions when staff need to arrive later for work or leave earlier (ie outside our office hours), or leave the office during the working day for non-work related appointments or matters. Any such requests should be made in advance to the line manager and the request will be considered on a case by case basis and approved subject to business need. Any time lost will be classed as 'time owing' which will need to be made up at a time and date(s) to be agreed with the line manager.

Dentist, GP and hospital appointments and any other personal appointment should normally be outside of your core hours. In the event that they occur during your normal working hours it must be discussed and agreed with the manager in advance. Such a request will be considered on the basis of operational needs and staffing levels.

Additionally in the event of an incident (for example a mass fatality incident) or under exceptional circumstances (for example a flu pandemic) we may operate extended working hours. We also operate a limited service on bank holidays and all CIOs will generally be required to work at least two bank holidays each year on a rota. Staff will be paid for all approved overtime worked. Once trained the CIO will be required to join the out of hours duty-rota (once established), to respond to matters between 5pm and 9am, which may be from home, but could also require attendance to mortuaries or exceptionally, scenes of death out of office hours, as indicated a timely response will be required. The duty CIO will liaise with the coroner on all matters that are reported.

Training and Continuous Professional Development

CIOs are required to undertake directed and self-directed learning during and outside of work in order to effectively work as a reflective practitioner. There is an expectation that you will develop broad knowledge of coroners and other relevant law and medical terms and causes of death as well as to continue your personal professional development.

There are two mandatory Staff Development Saturdays each year for which dates are provided with as much notice as possible. There is also chief coroner mandatory residential staff training each year (currently two days and outside Kent). Staff may also be required to attend further training which could include overnight stays. As it is not possible to close the office for staff training during the working week, additional training may be offered throughout the year on Saturdays which all staff are encouraged to attend but it is not compulsory.

Well Being

CIOs must be prepared to be in close proximity to and examine the body of a deceased person or persons, the bodies of which may be in various stages of decomposition or be damaged or subject to fragmentation. As CIOs are exposed to human remains we have an immunization policy for Blood Borne Viruses, CIOs are required to ensure that they are immunized against HBV, TB, tetanus, rubella and other infectious agents as required from time to time.

The work is pressured and subject to continuous competing demands, the CIO is responsible for meeting timelines set by the coroner or statute. Staff must therefore be prepared to take responsibility for their own health and well-being. KCC provides access to support and other services through occupational health. Additionally CIOs will have regular supervision meetings with their line manager where they can discuss any issues that may affect their performance or health and well-being.

KCC implements a Smoking Policy which seeks to guarantee you the right to work in an atmosphere free from tobacco smoke. Smoking is not permitted in the workplace apart from in the designated smoking areas. Smoking breaks are not paid and will be taken as part of your daily 36 minute refreshment break.

All activities are subject to health and safety policy and risk assessment. KCC undertakes to provide a safe working environment and the managers will take the necessary action to reduce the risk to self and others and make a positive contribution to the maintenance of a healthy and safe working environment and provide a secure, accessible and fit for purpose work area. All CIOs must comply with individual responsibilities for health and safety in the workplace and you will be required to undertake dynamic risk assessments when attending to any duty outside of the office to ensure that you: take reasonable care for your own health and safety, and that of others who are affected by what you do, or do not do. You will cooperate on all issues involving health and safety: use work items provided for you correctly, in accordance with training and instructions and do not interfere with or misuse anything provided for your health, safety or welfare; you should also report any health

and safety concerns to your line manager as soon as practicable. Additionally you will be asked to adhere to the immunisation policy, acceptable dress policy and conduct relevant dynamic risk assessments as relevant for example before attending a scene of death, other site or mortuaries.

Job Title	Coroners (Investigation) Officer
Typical Duties (may include but not limited to), the post holder will:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. with regards to judicial decisions act at all times under the express or implied direction of the coroner 2. seek guidance when necessary but at all times work under the management and further direction and guidance of the coroners' office manager or head of service as relevant 3. play a full role as part of the KCC coroner service team of coroners investigation officers, coroners court officers, coroners administration officers and coroners court ushers, support and assist colleagues and if appropriate mentor new team members 4. act within the scope of coroner law, other relevant statutory provisions and case law. To comply with the chief coroner's written advice and guidance 5. acquire through training and self-directed learning, knowledge and a working understanding of: coroner law and practice; medical terminology and causes of death; effective communication; and religious and cultural considerations in death 6. undergo compulsory chief coroner training, local training in the coroner's office itself or as required by KCC and to undertake continuous professional development activities outside normal working time 7. comply with the standard practice and procedures of the Kent coroner's service and Kent County Council 8. adhere to the Kent Code and the policies and procedures under KCC Terms and Conditions and the specific policies of the Coroner Service itself 9. receive reports of deaths on behalf of the coroner, the role is primarily office based but exceptionally you may be required, both during working hours and out of hours, to attend and investigate scenes of death or other venues in Kent to gather evidence, ensuring all evidence obtained for the coroner is appropriately safeguarded, 10. explain each step of the coroner process to the next of kin and keep the family and interested persons informed of progress including any delay 11. make preliminary inquiries of each death, assimilate the information into a report, create a database entry and report to the coroner in all cases, so that the coroner may make the appropriate judicial decision 12. arrange where appropriate for the transfer of the body to the mortuary and liaise with mortuary staff and coroners body removal contractors 13. arrange a post-mortem examination, autopsy or by way of imaging, as and when directed by the coroner and provide the pathologist or other specialist with all relevant information in advance of the examination(s) 14. attend forensic post-mortems on behalf of the coroner 15. inform the appropriate person(s) that: a post-mortem is to be held according to the statutory requirements and local protocols 16. inform the appropriate person(s) that material is retained and obtain direction for the disposal once the coroners function is ended; inform the pathologist or toxicologist of the directions, check that the relevant report confirms the material has been dealt with according to the instructions 17. liaise where appropriate with registrars of births and deaths, crematorium referees, funeral directors and bereavement offices and any other relevant professional partner 18. make all relevant inquiries where an investigation is started, on behalf of and at the direction of the coroner to include: liaising with any police investigation and other emergency services, medical inquiries of GPs and hospitals, work histories and any inquiries necessary for the purpose of a full and thorough investigation 19. obtain the relevant evidence with a view to ascertaining identification of the deceased on behalf of and as directed by the coroner 20. ensure all relevant evidence pertinent to any relevant issue (including witness statements) is secured where an investigation is started, on behalf of and at the direction of the coroner 	

21. create an investigation case file with a view to ascertaining when, where and how the deceased came by his/her death, including the medical cause of death
22. liaise with the family, interested persons and witnesses to determine availability and then liaise with the coroner and coroner's (court) officer to arrange for dates of the opening of the inquest, the inquest hearing and any pre-inquest hearings, as required by the coroner
23. prepare for the coroner an investigation case file for an inquest hearing where required
24. effectively manage a caseload as directed, adopting the agreed protocol for reviewing ongoing cases to meet the local and statutory time frames
25. record all notifications on the case record and note all actions taken and reasons for inaction
26. make relevant disclosure to interested persons, as directed by the coroner
27. respond promptly and politely to requests for information and explanation, whether by telephone, written communication or in person
28. liaise with the coroner's court officers for the handover of cases ready to be heard at inquest, ensure the coroner and jury (if present) is in possession of all the relevant documents and associated exhibits
29. attend court and give evidence as required
30. respond to all telephone calls and e-mail enquiries promptly and communicate with all members of the public, particularly bereaved family members, with sensitivity and compassion
31. treat people inside and outside the office with dignity and respect at all times, appreciating equality and diversity
32. maintain confidentiality where required and comply with KCC information governance policy
33. complete other investigative tasks, including making arrangements for transfers of investigations in or out of the coroner area, obtaining information for Out of England orders at the direction of the coroner
34. alert the line manager and coroner (as appropriate) at the earliest opportunity where there is a potential issue or complaint
35. operate and maintain the coroners case management database as necessary: produce statutory documents, other forms and reports as required; provide the data for entry onto the investigation case management tracker, complete case related administrative tasks as relevant
36. liaise with the coroner's court officer or coroners administration officer to arrange for translators, interpreters or process servers
37. participate in the standby duty rota to deal promptly and effectively with out of hours work
38. maintain a professional attitude, promote the Kent coroner service and KCC in a positive manner and adhere to individual or team performance and behaviour targets