

# Candidate Information Pack

## **AREA CORONER**

Mid Kent & Medway

And

North West Kent

Relevant Authority:

Kent County Council

March 2024

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This recruitment pack has been drafted in accordance with the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

## 1. ADVERT

### **Area Coroner for Mid Kent & Medway & North West Kent**

**Salary £111,001.68 pa [in line with the Coroners JNC Circular 68] [or part time equivalent]**

**Closing date: 23:59 on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

Kent County Council is seeking to appoint an Area Coroner. This is a new post.

#### **About the post:**

The Area Coroner will work closely with the Senior Coroner to provide judicial leadership to the coroner team as well as conducting their own coroner investigations and inquests. The area coroner may be nominated deputy for the Senior Coroner when the senior coroner is absent. The Area Coroner will be expected on occasion to be available out of hours on a rota based system where necessary.

Kent County Council is looking for an exceptional candidate with excellent proven organisational, management and efficiency skills, as well as experience of exercising sound judgement and communicating effectively. In this role, you will work closely with the senior coroner and local authority manager to ensure value for money, performance and financial efficiencies. Collaborative working with the senior coroner, local authority, the police and other stakeholders is essential.

You will be required to demonstrate knowledge and experience of coroner law and of basic medicine have proven skills in conducting investigations and an understanding of court procedure. You will also need to demonstrate the excellent communication and interpersonal skills necessary to deal with sensitive situations.

It is desirable that the successful candidate has proven experience of running or sharing running a coroner's jurisdiction including carrying out investigations, case management, and conducting inquests.

#### **Who can apply:**

The successful candidate will be a barrister or a solicitor or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives and satisfy the judicial-appointment eligibility condition which means they will have five years of experience *whilst* holding that qualification. They will be under the age of 75, have experience of working as an assistant coroner or area coroner and be subject to the appointment and eligibility conditions within the [Coroners and Justice Act 2009 \(s.23 and Schedule 3\)](#).

#### **Statutory Terms of the Appointment:**

Once a Coroner is appointed they are then a Judicial Office holder until they reach the age of 75 years (compulsory retirement age) unless they choose to resign or are removed by the Lord Chief Justice or Lord Chancellor prior to their 75th birthday.

#### **How to apply:**

If you wish to have an informal discussion or arrange a visit, please contact Belinda Hooker, KCC Interim Head of Service on 03000 421971 or via email on [Belinda.hooker@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Belinda.hooker@kent.gov.uk)

**Suitably qualified applicants are requested to email their CV and a Statement of Suitability demonstrating the 6 assessment criteria directly Belinda Hooker [Belinda.hooker@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Belinda.hooker@kent.gov.uk) as detailed in Section 5 'Recruitment and Selection Process'**

## **Notification**

The vacancy for this post has been notified to the Chief Coroner and Lord Chancellor (as required by statute).

## **2. CORONER SERVICE INFORMATION**

### **Area information**

The Kent and Medway include an area of 1, 516 square miles with a current population of around 1.82M. The four Kent & Medway coroner areas contain sections of the M2, M20 and M26 motorways as well as several major A-roads, main rail lines to and from London, the Channel Tunnel Rail link and Channel Tunnel, the ports of Dover, Ramsgate and Folkestone. There are 7 acute hospitals as well as several community hospitals, a large Mental Health Trust with inpatient and community facilities and 8 prisons.

The four Kent and Medway coroner areas received 6432 referrals in 2023 with 1256 inquests held, 11 with Juries. Standard post mortem examinations are conducted locally at 4 Hospital Trusts by Trust and independent histopathologists. Forensic post mortems are conducted locally. Other specialist post mortem examinations including paediatric or digital are conducted out of county at specialist centres with 3369 post mortem examinations being conducted in 2023.

### **Daily Operations and accommodation**

The service is located in dedicated accommodation, including offices and four courts at Oakwood House in Maidstone.

There are 5 full time coroners for the Kent and Medway coroner areas, with 2 senior coroners and 3 area coroners.

The Coroners are supported by Local Authority employees, comprising investigation officers, staff dealing with administrative matters and a management team with a Local Authority Head of Service.

The Coroners service operates weekdays between 9-5pm.

## **3. JOB SUMMARY**

### **The Role of the coroner:**

- Coroners are independent judicial office holders. When made aware that a body or bodies of deceased persons lie within the coroner area, the coroner is responsible for conducting investigations and holding inquests when required (with or without a jury) into deaths to determine who the deceased was, when and where the deceased came by his or her death and how that death occurred. A referral is made to the coroner when there is reason to suspect that:
  - i. The deceased died a violent or unnatural death;
  - ii. The cause of death is unknown; or
  - iii. The deceased died while in custody or otherwise in state detention.
- Conducting investigations of this kind will include where appropriate directing pathologists and others to determine these answers. Coroners also have a duty to produce Prevention of Future Death reports should an investigation give rise to concerns about future deaths occurring from the circumstances that caused the death. Coroners also deal with claims for treasure when required in accordance with statutory regulations and guidance.

## **The overview of the role of an area coroner:**

- The area coroner supports the Senior Coroner in providing a high quality coroner service that puts the bereaved at the heart of the process. The area coroner deputises for the senior coroner when the senior coroner is absent and works with the senior coroner to ensure that the day to day running of the jurisdiction takes place to the highest standard. This includes preparing for any significant emergencies which may occur as some out of hours work may be required where demand requires. The area coroner will assist the senior coroner in submitting annual returns to the Chief Coroner and Lord Chancellor as and when required.

## **Area coroner Role Responsibilities and Assessment criteria**

### **Assimilating and clarifying information**

As an area coroner you will be expected to be able to quickly assimilate information to identify essential issues, seeking clarification where necessary so a clear understanding of this information is gained. This will include possessing the ability to explain legal and medical terms to people from non-legal or non-medical backgrounds.

#### **Assessment criteria**

1. **Excellent analytical skills and a consistency of decision-making and administrative direction.**
2. **Experience of legal work in the coroner jurisdiction (e.g. representing clients at inquest).**
3. **The ability to explain complex terms to those from non-legal or non-medical backgrounds.**

### **Managing work effectively**

A large amount of coronial work takes place outside of the court setting and therefore area coroners are expected to work effectively both in the office and whilst conducting court hearings. They will also assist the senior coroner in the management of work across the team as a whole. When sitting area coroners are required to run hearings efficiently to facilitate a fair conclusion, minimise delays and effectively deal with case management. Area coroners must respond calmly and flexibly to changing circumstances and prioritise work effectively to make the most of available resources whilst taking in to account any budgetary considerations as appropriate. Area coroners are committed to ensuring that any expenditure is reasonable and controlled and works to monitor this regularly with the senior coroner.

#### **Assessment criteria:**

4. **An ability to prioritise work effectively to minimise delays.**
5. **Able to work at speed and under pressure.**
6. **Demonstrates resilience responding calmly and flexibly to changing circumstances.**
7. **Is able to assist in managing and leading a team effectively.**

### **Working with others**

An ability to work constructively with others whilst demonstrating an awareness of diversity and showing empathy and sensitivity in building relationships is required in this post. Area coroners must be able to constructively assist the senior coroner in leading members of the coronial team and interact well with bereaved families and external stakeholders (e.g. relatives, police officers, medical personnel, mortuary staff, Registrars, witnesses and the media). Where necessary they assist the senior coroner to engage with the local community, for example giving talks and seeking feedback and views.

### **Assessment criteria:**

- 8. Must have knowledge of the extent to which cultural and religious requirements can be met within the constraints of coroner law and practice.**
- 9. An ability to drive the service and be receptive to new ideas, reforms and diverse needs.**
- 10. Treats people with respect, sensitivity and in a fair manner without discrimination; ensuring the requirements of those with differing needs are properly met.**

### **Communicating effectively**

Area coroners must be excellent communicators and have the ability to express themselves clearly and authoritatively when required. They must be sensitive and, as far as possible, responsive to the needs and requirements of those who engage with the coroner service and also possess the awareness to manage their expectations of the coroner process. Area coroners must be IT literate and able to provide clear directions to staff on coroner investigations whilst creating a safe, harmonious and effective working environment through co-operative working including supporting the senior coroner with holding team meetings.

### **Assessment Criteria:**

- 11. Excellent verbal and written communication skills.**
- 12. Establishes authority and inspires respect and confidence.**
- 13. Remains calm and authoritative even when challenged.**

### **Exercising judgement**

Area coroners must demonstrate integrity and apply independence of mind to make incisive, fair and legally sound decisions.

### **Assessment criteria**

- 14. Able to deal with emotionally charged situations that require sensitive handling and confident/positive judgement.**
- 15. Experience of conducting investigative enquiries including demonstrating clarity of thought in identifying issues relevant to the investigation.**
- 16. Reaches clear, reasoned decisions objectively, based on relevant law and findings of fact.**

### **Possessing and Building Knowledge**

It is the responsibility of the area coroner to keep an up-to-date working knowledge of coroner law, practice and guidance. Coroners must undertake compulsory Judicial College and Chief Coroner training as appropriate. Area coroners are expected to take part in local training as and when required.

### **Assessment criteria:**

- 17. All applicants must be a barrister or solicitor or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives and satisfy the judicial-appointment eligibility condition which includes a requirement for the candidate to hold a relevant qualification, to have also gained experience in the law for a total period of at least 5 years *whilst holding that qualification* and be under the age of 75: paragraph 3 of Schedule 3.**
- 18. Thorough, up to date knowledge of legislation, case law and guidance relating to coroner's duties.**
- 19. Knowledge of structures and procedures of the police, in particular those relating to the investigation of sudden or suspicious deaths.**
- 20. Knowledge of the organisational structures of local government including an understanding of the challenges facing local government, both at present and in the future.**
- 21. Experience of holding inquests, including jury inquests.**
- 22. Previous experience as an area or assistant coroner**

Please detail your coroner experience and confirm the following:

- (a) how many days worked as coroner;
- (b) the nature of the work;
- (c) the division of time between office and court;
- (d) the extent of experience in completing Forms 100A and 100B;
- (e) the number and type of inquests conducted;
- (f) the number of long inquests and their subject matter; and
- (g) the number of Jury inquests conducted.
- (h) experience of digital case management systems.

**Desirable criteria:**

**23. Full current driving licence (unless disability precludes this) and use of a vehicle for work purposes.**

#### **4. SUMMARY OF TERMS & CONDITIONS OF THE AREA CORONER**

The conditions of service applicable to the post are those set out in Schedule 3, Coroners and Justice Act 2009. The area coroner holds office on whatever terms are from time to time agreed between the coroner and the relevant local authority. You will not be an employee of the Local Authority.

[the following section contains some general terms and conditions in relation to this post, a full list of recommended terms and conditions is available upon request]

#### **Salary**

The annual salary for the post £111,001.68 For a basic 40 hour a week together with the provision of an out of hours service. The salary provision includes working on occasion out of hours on a rota basis. **[in line with the Coroners JNC Circular 68]**

#### **Pension Scheme**

An Area Coroner may join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) in accordance with any provisions relating to coroner appointments as applied to that scheme.

#### **Travelling Distance to work**

The Area Coroner must live within a reasonable commuting distance of the office and court and must maintain a regular presence in the office/court. Remote working is acceptable when not required in court or for office based functions.

#### **Holiday entitlement**

The Area Coroner will be expected to take an annual leave entitlement of 30 days (excluding bank holidays and public holidays).

#### **Sick Pay**

The Area coroner is entitled to full sick pay (subject to medical evidence) and the local authority will provide assistant cover during the period of sickness to meet the needs of the Area.

#### **Payment of expenses**

Expenses will be paid in line with the Council's expenses policy.

## **Indemnity**

The Council will indemnify the Area Coroner for costs or damages in relation to legal proceedings in accordance with Regulation 17 of The Coroners Allowances, Fees and Expenses Regulations 2013.

## **Notice period**

The Area Coroner may resign from office by giving notice in writing to the relevant authority, however the resignation does not take effect unless and until it is accepted by the authority.

## **Politically restricted post**

This post is politically restricted under the terms of Schedule 3, paragraph 4 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

## **The Guide to Judicial Conduct**

The Area Coroner will comply with the standards as set out in the Guide to Judicial Conduct and other associated guidance.

## **5. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS**

### **Applications**

To apply for this position, you are required to submit your CV and a full supporting statement of up to two sides of A4 (no smaller than font 11) **via email** to Belinda Hooker [belinda.hooker@kent.gov.uk](mailto:belinda.hooker@kent.gov.uk)

It is important that your supporting statement to fully addresses the assessment criteria detailed in **bold** in the job summary section above.

**In particular please demonstrate how you meet the following criteria:**

- 1. Assimilating and clarifying information**
- 2. Managing work efficiently**
- 3. Working with others**
- 4. Communicating effectively**
- 5. Exercising judgement**
- 6. Possessing and Building Knowledge**

**If you do not complete a full supporting statement, your application will be rejected.** Please ensure you include your work, home and mobile contact numbers, home address and e-mail addresses where applicable. Please note that correspondence will be via e-mail unless otherwise stated. All correspondence and details provided will remain confidential.

### **Employment references**

Please include the name, address and contact details for two references. Candidates should also state their relationship to the referee and at least one should be your current/most recent employer/head of chambers/relevant authority. References will be taken up for short-listed candidates.

### **Evidence of qualifications**

Candidates will be required to bring evidence of their qualifications to the interview.

### **Eligibility to work in the UK**



Candidates must be eligible to work in the UK. The successful candidate will be required to provide original evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK.

### **Disciplinary proceedings and criminal convictions check**

Due to the nature of the post, it is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and therefore any conviction, whether spent or unspent, must be declared. All applicants will be required to complete a declaration form when they attend for interview .

Applicants must specify in their application if they are the subject of any complaint or disciplinary proceedings by any professional body to which they belong (including personal conduct referred to the Judicial Conduct Investigations Office), and clearly state the salary or fee payable. Applicants will also be asked in interview to declare anything about themselves including in their past that might be an embarrassment to the Local Authority, the Chief Coroner or the Lord Chancellor particularly bearing in mind the basic set of guiding principles in the Guide to Judicial Conduct:

<https://www.judiciary.uk/publications/guide-to-judicial-conduct/>

### **Interview**

You will be required to undertake a short presentation as part of the interview process.

### **Chief Coroner's role in the process**

The Chief Coroner or his nominee will be providing advice to the Council throughout the recruitment process, in particular so as to ensure that the process is fully transparent and fair. Although the Chief Coroner or his nominee may be at the interviews they are not a member of the panel and as such have no role in scoring candidates or voting for a candidate.

No appointment may be made unless the Chief Coroner and the Lord Chancellor consent to it.

Once appointed a Coroner becomes and remains an independent judicial officer holder.

## **6. RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE**

**Closing date: 23:59 on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2024.**

**Interview invitations will be sent out: w/c 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

**Interview date: Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

**If you do not hear by 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024, please assume you have not been shortlisted.**

**The interview panel will be:**

**Patricia Harding** - H.M.Senior Coroner Mid Kent & Medway Central, South East Kent & North East Kent

**Roger L. Hatch** - H. M. Senior Coroner North West Kent

**Mark Rolfe** - Interim Head of Community Protection, Community Safety, Coroners, (Kent Scientific Services and Trading Standards )

**Belinda Hooker** – Interim Head of Service - Kent & Medway Coroner Service | Economic and Community Protection

**Observing: Chief Coroner or nominee**

**We are aiming for the successful candidate to take up post as soon as possible**