



March 2024

## APPLICANT INFORMATION PACK

Dear Candidate

### Reference your application for post of Coroners Court Usher and Administrator (CCU)

Thank you for your interest in this busy but rewarding role. The successful candidate 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 answer any mandatory questions for your application to be considered
- 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) (2020);
  - HND Bio-medical Science (distinction) (2017);
  - GCSE (O-level) English Literature (C) (2015)
- **Refer to the person specification and use your answers to the four mandatory questions and the 'reason for application' to demonstrate how your experience, knowledge or skills and achievements will transfer to the position you are applying for, please provide examples.**

### Shortlisting

Three mandatory questions and 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. Successful candidates at this stage will be invited for an on-line IT assessment. Please make a diary note of the date(s) if provided.

### The Interview

Candidates that are successful at the pre interview assessment will be informed asap and invited for interview. Please make a diary note of the interview date(s) if provided. The successful candidate(s) 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 Coroners Court Usher**

The position of Coroners Court Usher makes an important contribution to the successful delivery of coroners court hearings (Inquests) and has been adopted by Kent County Council since 2016.

The role of the court usher is not only important, it is also extremely rewarding, the usher is generally the first person a family member or witness meets when attending the inquest hearing. Often it is the first time the person may have been to a court setting themselves, and often it is an emotional time sometimes following tragic circumstances. The usher can make a big difference for the family or witness, offering guidance, reassurance and kindness.

Once trained the usher will be responsible for all tasks related to setting up the court room itself, including the court electronic equipment, running the court recording equipment, making sure there is water and tissues available; meet and greet all family members and witnesses, complete pre court admin tasks, perhaps show the family the court room, explain where they will be seated and what the procedure is. The usher has an important role to support the running of the court, and will need to be proficient in operating IT and electronic equipment and be comfortable speaking in the court room, to make sure processes are followed, for example 'bringing' the coroner into court, administering the oath or affirmation before a witness gives evidence, taking care of a jury (if present), and also dealing with the post-inquest administrative tasks, explain to the family how they will obtain a death certificate and completing any electronic tasks on the case management system.

When not operating a court, the full-time usher will carry out tasks to support the general operation of the courts, for example checking equipment is functioning, arranging repairs, preparing cases for hearing the next day, planning cover for courts, supporting or assisting other ushers for example, relieving at lunch time, booking lunches for jurors. Then there is the post inquest tasks, archiving cases for the historic record, downloading and storing inquest recordings, providing post inquest disclosure and processing witness or juror expense claims.

The full-time usher will also be trained to support the coroners court supervisor with some administrative tasks, monitoring the court diaries, ensure there are sufficient ushers booked, that any late changes are dealt with. You will also be trained in some of the office based administrative duties for periods when you are not required in court. These tasks will be varied and include answering and making calls to the bereaved families and stakeholder partners and a range of administrative duties.

### **The Coroner Service Team**

The KCC Coroner Service Team sits within the Economic and Community Protection Unit, the Head of which is Mark Rolfe. ECP sits within the Growth, Communities and Environment division, the Director is Stephanie Holt-Castle, the Corporate Director is Simon Jones.

The Usher is an important member of the Coroner Service Team which also consists of Coroners Investigation Officers (CIO) to conduct the investigation into any death reported to the coroner, the Coroners Court Officers (CCO) and Coroners Administration Officers that work to prepare cases for court and deal with matters of Treasure.

The current staffing structure consists of:

'as and when' coroners court ushers	'full-time' coroners court ushers
coroners administration officers	coroners court officers
coroners investigation officers	coroners office supervisor
coroners court supervisor	coroners office managers
coroner service operations manager	head of service

The Coroners Court Usher (CCU) is based at the court venue, attends and manages all inquest hearings. On a day-to-day basis the CCU, CIO, CCO and CAO will work collaboratively to ensure seamless progression of cases reported to the Coroner Service.

In Kent & Medway there are 4 distinct coroner areas, each with a senior coroner who is an independent judicial officer and not a KCC employee. The court listings may be from any of the four areas and each day may contain multiple cases or one case lasting a full day or longer.

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.

### **Work-base**

Although your work-base is Cantium House Maidstone, subject to business need you may be asked to work from another court location including County Hall (Sessions House) in Maidstone itself and also at Oxford Road which is on the outskirts of Maidstone. You will need to be able to travel to all sites and transport court equipment between sites. Should you be asked to make any work-related journeys mileage allowance and other approved expenses 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 and Courts Hours**

The KCC coroner service operates core office hours Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm but courts can start setting up from 8:30am.

The role is full time, 37 hours per week with 36 mins unpaid break each day however subject to business need we may ask staff to work their hours between 8am and 6pm, or ask staff to work additional hours. Staff will be paid for all approved overtime worked.

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 and full time CCUs may be asked to work additional hours. Although some staff operate a limited service on bank holidays and provide an out of hours duty-rota, to respond to matters between 5pm and 9am, there is no requirement for CCOs, CAOs or CCUs to routinely work bank holidays or out of hours, except for exceptional circumstances.

Although KCC flexi-time is not available to the Coroner Service Team, 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 core 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.

### **Training and Continuous Professional Development**

You will receive full training on appointment and further professional development will be available either specifically relating to the coroner service or more general KCC training. Additionally the coroner service team have up to two Staff Development Saturdays each year for which dates are provided with as much notice as possible and the time is paid.

### **Well Being**

The work is pressured and subject to continuous competing demands and all staff working in the Coroner Service including the court ushers must be prepared to see visual images, for example photographs in a case file or video of the body of a deceased person or persons, on occasion video and or voice recordings of incidents that may be graphic and distressing including reports of post-mortem examinations or other findings.

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, CCUs will have regular supervision meetings and 1-2-1s with their line manager where you can discuss any issues that may affect your 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 CCUs 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 including those related to courts 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.

### **Employment with Kent County Council (KCC)**

The CCU 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. 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 consisting of business wear and when relevant clothing appropriate for court.

The CCU post is KCC grade KR5 with an annual salary of £22,595 to £23,693 (at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023). All new KCC appointments are made at £22,595. The annual pay increase is subject to a TCP award and not incremental

points on a scale. You have the opportunity to progress through your grade under the Total Contribution (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 1<sup>st</sup> April). CCUs are entitled to 27 days annual leave (per full year) rising to 29 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 CCUs 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 either receive pay or 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 31<sup>st</sup> March.

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

All new appointments to KCC are subject to receipt of two satisfactory references and confirmation in post is 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.

Job Title	<b>Coroners Court Usher and Administrator (Courts)</b>
<b>Typical Duties (may include but not limited to), the post holder will:</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. act at all times under the express or implied direction of the coroner for all judicial matters</li><li>2. seek guidance when necessary but at all times work under the further direction and guidance of the coroner's court supervisor, or other manager as relevant</li><li>3. 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 and the standard practice and procedures of the Kent and Medway coroner service</li><li>4. act within the scope of the policies and procedures of Kent County Council and the expectations of the Coroner Service Team</li><li>5. understand the role of the Coroner Service Team in delivering the strategic vision of the Public Protection Unit and KCC</li><li>6. 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</li></ol>	

7. always treat people inside and outside the office with dignity and respect, value equality and diversity
8. maintain confidentiality and comply with KCC information governance policy, intellectual property rights and GDPR regulations
9. adhere to KCC Safeguarding and Prevent policies and strategies
10. play a full role as part of the KCC coroner service team of coroners court ushers, coroners administration officers, coroners court officers, coroners investigation officers, court volunteers, coroners court supervisors, coroners office managers and the head of service
11. alert the coroners court supervisor, coroners office manager or line manager (as appropriate) at the earliest opportunity where there is a potential issue or complaint
12. ensure integrity, fairness, and consideration of the needs of others is integral to all your actions to achieve professional and equitable working practices
13. look for opportunities to improve or innovate
14. support and assist coroners court usher colleagues and if appropriate train or mentor new team members
15. welcome new team members and assist with the buddy role for new team members
16. acquire through training and self-directed learning knowledge and a working understanding of: coroner law and practice; effective communication; religious and cultural considerations in death
17. undergo compulsory training as required, local training in the coroners office or court itself or as required by KCC and to undertake continuous professional development activities
18. ensure the courtroom is prepared for the list of inquest hearing, including setting up and testing all equipment
19. Work from the court office and undertake reception duties as per the allocated rota
20. Greet those coming to court for hearings such as witnesses, family members or other visitors and guide or direct as appropriate
21. provide explanations to family and witnesses about the process in the court and after the inquest
22. ensure all family members, witnesses and Interested Persons are admitted into court either in person or virtually in a timely manner
23. direct witnesses and jurors in the taking of oaths and affirmations
24. where a jury is present the 'sworn usher' has a duty to prevent anyone from approaching the jury without permission
25. ensure all evidence is available and provided to the jury or coroner as required
26. speak to the court, to witnesses and jurors as relevant
27. act as a communication channel to the coroner as directed by Coroner Service Supervisors
28. keep public areas disciplined and under control
29. rising the court to allow the coroner to enter and leave, exiting all persons from the court once

hearing is complete

30. explain to families how to obtain the death certificate and post inquest documents
31. complete relevant post inquest administrative duties, such as transferring and saving court recordings and attaching relevant documents and judicial forms onto our computer database and produce relevant post-inquest documents and forms
32. provide post inquest disclosure as directed
33. archive historical coroner records and concluded inquest cases, liaise with the Kent Archive Service to retrieve archived files and ensure that requests for information are processed in a timely and efficient manner and maintain the document log
34. support the general operation of the courts, for example checking equipment is functioning, reporting and logging faults and arranging repairs
35. preparing cases for hearing the next day
36. supporting or assisting other ushers for example, relieving at lunch time, booking lunches for jurors
37. ensure witnesses and jurors know how to claim expenses, check and process witness or juror expense claims
38. as required create Teams inquest hearing links and share as appropriate
39. ensure interpreters have been arranged and hearing loops are functioning as relevant
40. confirm that all witnesses, interested persons and family members have been notified of the hearing according to the statutory requirements
41. produce summons as directed, meet and brief jury members, ensure jury are secluded
42. print and package document bundles as required eg for disclosure to interested persons and jury bundles subject to the statutory and local requirements
43. provide digital recordings to interested persons subject to the statutory and local requirements
44. support the coroners court supervisor with some administrative tasks as directed, including but not limited to (see below):
45. collection, filing and saving of fire registers at court locations for coroners staff and visitors attending court locations
46. monitor the court diaries, liaise with coroner service supervisor to ensure there are sufficient ushers booked, that any late changes are dealt with, inform the CCS of any issues
47. monitor court IT equipment, ensure issues are reported to coroner service supervisor, maintain a log, liaise with CCS regarding broken or damaged equipment, carry out IT updates on court equipment, testing equipment and regular inventory checks at court locations
48. report any building related issues to CCS eg lighting, heating, damage to furniture, health & safety issues
49. ensure adequate supplies of court related stationery and provisions and cleansing related supplies are maintained and reordered via the senior court officers
50. ensure adequate supplies of water, disposable cups and jury refreshments are available and the

areas are clean and tidy

51. support the recruitment and selection and induction of other coroners court ushers
52. work flexibly to support the Kent & Medway Coroner Service
53. Check building has been vacated and secure at the end of the day (court side)
54. Check TV monitors are showing accurate listings and running on time