

Candidate Information Pack

HM ASSISTANT CORONER

Inner North London

London Borough of Camden

on behalf of Camden, Islington, Hackney and Tower Hamlets

May 2022

HM ASSISTANT CORONER FOR INNER NORTH LONDON

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

1. ADVERT

HM Assistant Coroner for Inner North Coroner

Salary – fee paid, £479 per day, in line with the JNC Coroners Circular 66

Closing date: Sunday 5th June 23:59 hours

Camden is seeking to appoint up to three new Assistant Coroners to support the Senior Coroner for Inner North London across the full range of coroner duties in order to deliver a high-quality coroner service to the people of Inner North London. The appointments will be permanent and will include on call out of hours working.

The Assistant Coroners will be based in the Inner North London dedicated courts and offices. These are at St Pancras and Poplar, and soon to be at Bow. Office opening hours are 8am to 4pm, but court may run to 4.30pm and sometimes later.

Without the physical space to hold jury inquests at St Pancras and Poplar during the pandemic, a large backlog has accrued in Inner North London. In the first three years after appointment, the successful candidates will be expected to concentrate upon hearing jury inquests at Bow. These are likely to be two, three and four weeks long. The successful candidates must have sufficient familiarity with jury inquests to be able to undertake the planning and hearing of these complex cases competently and confidently.

About the post

Camden is looking for exceptional candidates with excellent proven organisational, management and efficiency skills, as well as experience of exercising sound judgement and communicating effectively. You will work closely with the Senior Coroner to ensure value for money, performance and financial efficiencies.

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.

The successful candidates will be required to carry out the duties and responsibilities of a Coroner as defined in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and associated rules and regulations and as further described in various guidance issued by the Chief Coroner.

These are fee paid positions although they are likely to involve a regular commitment, which is to be agreed between the Assistant Coroners and Senior Coroner. You will be expected to be available to assist on an out of hours rota system.

It is a Coroner's personal responsibility (and not that of his/her clerk/secretary) to ensure that they sit when possible. The Chief Coroner and the Lord Chancellor expect an Assistant Coroner to offer a minimum of 20 sitting days each financial year. However, it is recognised that there is a variance of workload in each area.

Who can apply

The successful candidates 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 5 years of experience *whilst* holding that qualification. They will be under the age of 70 and be subject to the appointment and eligibility conditions within the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 (Section 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 70 years or the compulsory retirement age at that time in force, unless they choose to resign or are removed by the Lord Chief Justice or Lord Chancellor prior to their 70th birthday.

How to apply

The candidate pack is available here:

If you wish to have an informal discussion, please contact Ms Amal Kunwar, Coronial Services and Business Development Manager, on: Amal.Kunwar@camden.gov.uk

Suitably qualified applicants are requested to email their CV and supporting statement to Resourcing@camden.gov.uk

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 Inner North London Coroner area includes the London Boroughs of Camden, Islington, Hackney and Tower Hamlets, an area of approximately 30 square miles with a current population of around 1 million. In 2020, there were 2,548 deaths registered and 610 inquests held.

The Coroner area contains many national rail, underground and overground railway stations; plus Docklands Light Railway, St Pancras International Railway Station policed by UK Border Force, and Cycle Super Highways.

The local prison is HMP Pentonville. Hospitals include the regional trauma unit with helicopter landing at the Royal London Hospital, University College London Hospital, Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, Homerton University Hospital, the Royal Free Hospital and Whittington Hospital, as well as numerous psychiatric units.

There is a large transient population including foreign nationals. The area contains the largest population of Hasidic Jews in Europe, and the borough with the largest proportion of Muslims in the UK. Members of both of these communities are often very keen to bury on the day of death, or often seek to quickly repatriate the deceased abroad.

Post mortem examinations are conducted at the boroughs' four public mortuaries and some hospital mortuaries. Forensic and paediatric pathology services are available within the area, as is post mortem CT scanning. All the local hospitals provide medical examiner services.

Daily operations and accommodation

The service and all staff are located in dedicated accommodation at the St Pancras and Poplar Coroner's Courts, with an additional Coroner's Court for juries to be opened at Bow.

The courts and offices are open Monday-Friday 8am to 4pm (but with inquest hearings often running later). Camden administrative support staff are responsible for answering incoming calls.

Currently, the expectation is for 12 Coroner's officers to be provided by the Metropolitan Police Service. In addition, there is a Coroner's officer manager. The Senior Coroner, Assistant Coroners and Coroner's officers are supported by four administrative staff employed by Camden Council.

Accommodation, contracts, tendering, finance, and support staff are managed by the Coronial Services and Business Development Manager, who is employed by Camden Council in the Public Protection and Community Safety Service.

Dates for inquest conclusion are listed as soon as inquests are opened, for *non jury* inquest hearings usually within the required six months. In 2020, the average time from death report to inquest conclusion was 21 weeks, the lowest in London.

However, without the physical space to hold *jury* inquests at St Pancras and Poplar during the pandemic, a very large backlog has accrued. The intention is that, as soon as Bow Coroner's Court is ready to open in the latter half of 2022, the juries will be heard there. The backlog of jury inquests is likely to take three years to hear and the Assistant Coroners will play a crucial role with this.

3. JOB SUMMARY

The role of the Coroner

- Coroners are independent judges. 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; or
 - 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 assist in the determination of answers to the four questions. 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. When required, Coroners deal with claims for treasure in accordance with statutory regulations and guidance.

Overview of the role of HM Assistant Coroner

- To support HM Senior Coroner in providing a high quality coroner service that puts the bereaved at the heart of the process. This includes preparing for any significant emergencies which may occur and, where required, being available to assist with 24 hour availability on a rota basis.

HM ASSISTANT CORONER ROLE, RESPONSIBILITIES AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Assimilating and clarifying information

As an Assistant 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 and/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 and/or non-medical backgrounds.**

Managing work effectively

A large amount of coronial work takes place outside of the court setting and therefore Assistant Coroners are expected to work effectively both in the office and whilst conducting court hearings. They are required to run hearings efficiently to facilitate a fair conclusion, minimise delays and effectively deal with case management. Assistant 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. Assistant 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. An ability to work at speed and under pressure.**
- 6. Demonstrates resilience responding calmly and flexibly to changing circumstances.**

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. Assistant Coroners must work constructively with 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:

- 7. Must have knowledge of the extent to which cultural and religious requirements can be met within the constraints of coroner law and practice.**
- 8. An ability to drive the service and be receptive to new ideas, reforms and diverse needs.**
- 9. 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

Assistant Coroners must be excellent communicators. 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 process. Assistant Coroners must be IT literate and provide clear directions to staff on coroner investigations whilst creating a safe, harmonious and effective working environment through co-operative working.

Assessment criteria:

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

Exercising judgement

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

Assessment criteria

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

Possessing and building knowledge

It is the responsibility of the Assistant Coroner to keep an up-to-date working knowledge of coroner law, practice and guidance. Coroners must also undertake compulsory Judicial College and Chief Coroner training as appropriate. Assistant Coroners should take part in any local training as appropriate. Assistant Coroners are expected to take part in the on-going Assistant Coroner appraisal scheme to build upon their knowledge and skills.

Assessment criteria:

- 16. 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 70: paragraph 3 of Schedule 3 CJA 2009.**
- 17. Thorough, up to date knowledge of legislation, case law and guidance relating to coroner's duties.**
- 18. Knowledge of structures and procedures of the police, in particular those relating to the investigation of sudden or suspicious deaths.**
- 19. Knowledge of the organisational structures of local government including an understanding of the challenges facing local government, both at present and in the future.**

Previous Coroner experience

If you have worked or currently work as a Coroner, it is important that you detail your Coroner experience. Please can you confirm in your application 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 system.

4. SUMMARY OF TERMS & CONDITIONS

The conditions of service applicable to the post are those set out in Schedule 3, Coroners and Justice Act 2009. HM Assistant Coroner holds office on whatever terms are *from time to time agreed between the coroner and the relevant local authority*.

Fee

The post is fee paid and the current fee is £479 per day in line with the JNC Coroners Circular 66.

Pension Scheme

An Assistant Coroner may join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LPGS).

Hours of work

As these are fee paid positions, the Assistant Coroners will work on days and at times as agreed with the Senior Coroner, but with core working hours in the office of 8am – 4pm on any given day. Assistant Coroners must live within a reasonable commuting distance from the courts and offices at St Pancras, Poplar and Bow.

You will in the future be required to participate in an out of hours service, on a rota organised by HM Senior Coroner.

Holiday entitlement

None (fee paid appointment).

Payment of expenses

Expenses will be paid in line with the council's expenses policy. Reasonable expenses for attendance at judicial training (including travel expenses, accommodation where necessary and a normal sitting fee payable for each day of training) will be paid by the local authority.

Indemnity

The council will indemnify HM Coroners for Inner North London, including Assistant Coroners, for costs and damages in relation to legal proceedings in accordance with Regulation 17 of The Coroners Allowances, Fees and Expenses Regulations 2013.

Notice period

An Assistant 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

Assistant Coroners 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 a CV, and a full supporting statement of up to two sides of A4 (no smaller than font 11). It is important that your supporting statement 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 (originals) of their qualifications to the interview.

Employment checks

The successful candidates will be required to undergo the council's pre-appointment checks.

Eligibility to work in the UK

Candidates must be eligible to work in the UK. The successful candidates 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. The successful candidates will be required to undergo a DBS check.

Applicants must specify in their application if they are or have been 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).

Applicants must declare in their application anything about themselves, including in their past, that might be an embarrassment to the Senior Coroner, 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

All appointments are subject to the consent of the Chief Coroner and the Lord Chancellor.

Once appointed a Coroner becomes and remains an independent judge.

6. RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE

Suitably qualified applicants are asked to email their CV and supporting statement to:

Resourcing@camden.gov.uk

Closing date is 5th June 2022 at 23:59 hours

Interview invitations will be emailed on the week commencing 20th June 2022

If you do not hear by 21st June 2022, please assume that you have not been shortlisted

Interview dates are Friday 1st , 21st and 28th July 2022

The interview venue is Camden Council, 5 Pancras Square, London N1C 4AG

The interview panel will be:

- Ms Carole Stewart, Director of Community Services, Camden Council
- Coroner ME Hassell, HM Senior Coroner for Inner North London
- Ms Susan Greening, Camden Council

We are aiming for the successful candidates to take up post as soon as DBS (and other) checks have been completed.