

Each year thousands of people are called upon to serve on juries in courts in England and Wales. As a juror, you have a chance to play a vital part in the justice system.

You have been chosen to be a juror at a coroner's inquest.

This leaflet explains:

- how you have been chosen
- what to do when you receive the jury summons
- what the jury does at an coroner's inquest.

Please note: This leaflet gives general guidance; details may vary in individual coroners' courts.

What is an inquest?

Under the law of England and Wales, an inquest must be held to investigate certain deaths.

The inquest is conducted by a coroner in a coroner's court.

Inquests are always open to the public, unless the coroner rules that this would not be in the interests of national security.

What does the jury do?

The jury hears the evidence and, after being directed by the coroner, must reach conclusions on the following key facts:

- who the person was
- how, when and where they died
- the information needed to register the death.

The jury does **not** have to view the body in order to arrive at these (or any other) facts.

Unlike other types of court, an inquest is not a trial. The jury does not have to find someone guilty or not guilty, nor does it have to decide if someone is to blame for the death or if anyone should receive compensation.

On the day, the coroner will explain in detail what you are required to do.

Doing jury service

With a few exceptions, everyone aged 18 - 70 who is on the UK Electoral Register can be called for jury service. The Central Jury Summoning Bureau chooses people at random to serve. Please note: if you are called, it is an offence not to attend without good reason. A definition of 'good reason' is given in the jury summons.

What to do when you receive a jury summons

When you receive a jury summons, you should:

- sign the receipt
- confirm you can attend at the appointed place, day and time
- return the completed form in the pre-paid envelope provided.

If you think you won't be able to attend, please write immediately to the coroner's office at the address given in the accompanying notice, giving your reasons.

If you have any problems or difficulties

It is in everyone's interests that inquests are held efficiently and effectively.

So, if you become ill or something happens that prevents you from doing your jury service, please phone the coroner's office as soon as possible or ensure someone else does so on your behalf.

You can also contact the coroner's office if you have any queries about your jury service.

If you have a disability

Please let the coroner's office know if you have a disability so that any necessary arrangements can be made for you.

What happens on the day of the inquest?

Please be punctual. Make sure that you arrive at the court before the set time. If a juror is late or absent it can delay the start of the inquest, causing inconvenience to everyone.

Dress appropriately out of respect for the seriousness of the event and the feelings of the bereaved.

Electronic equipment is not allowed. You may not take iPods, personal stereos, recording equipment or mobile phones into the jury room or courtroom. Please hand these to the coroner's officer for safekeeping.

On arrival, you will be shown to the jury room. This is where you will meet the other jurors and where you will go to discuss the case together in private. No one else is allowed in the jury room.

The coroner's officer will explain to you:

- the timetable for the day
- when it's time to go into court and where to sit
- if you can buy refreshments in the building, and
- help you with any other queries.

Oaths and affirmations

Before the inquest starts, each member of the jury must be formally sworn in. You can either take an oath on a holy book or make a non-religious affirmation. If you want to take the oath on a holy book other than the New Testament, please tell the coroner's office when you send the receipt for the jury summons. Also let the office know if you need to make special arrangements before you handle a holy book.

Travel costs

You may claim the cost of the return journey between your home and the court.

- If you use public transport, you can claim the standard class return fare.
- If you drive your car, you can claim an allowance based on the number of miles travelled to and from the court using the most direct route.

You may use a taxi if the coroner is satisfied that there is no available alternative. Please check with the coroner's office that using a taxi is acceptable.

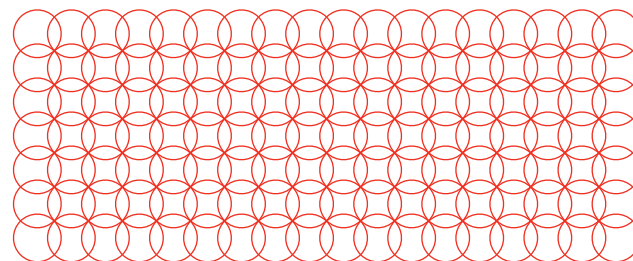
Other expenses

You may also claim for subsistence and financial loss allowance. The coroner's officer will explain the details, and give you an Expenses Claim Form.

For more information about coroner's inquests, visit:
www.direct.gov.uk/en/rightsandresponsibilities/death/whattodoafteradeath

Jury service at an inquest

A guide for jurors



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