

Inquests

A guide to Inquests and how we can assist

Expert advice

An Inquest can be a very daunting prospect for a bereaved family.

Slater and Gordon has a team of specialist lawyers with a vast amount of experience in representing families at Inquests where a death has resulted from an industrial disease, an accident at work, a road traffic collision, medical negligence or a major aviation / maritime disaster.

They can guide you through the process and ensure that all your questions are addressed with empathy and understanding and that the events are thoroughly investigated.

If you need advice about an Inquest, then it's important that you consult one of our specialist Inquest lawyers from our medical negligence or personal injury team.



What is an Inquest?

An Inquest is an independent judicial inquiry carried out by a Coroner to establish the following:

- The identity of the deceased
- The place and time of the death
- The cause of the death

An inquest is a fact finding exercise and is not intended to apportion blame. In certain cases, such as the death of a mental health patient who was at risk of suicide, the Inquest will be wider ranging and may involve a jury.

What is the Coroner's Court?

The Coroner's Court is where Inquests are held. It's often in the same building as the Magistrates Court or County Court. It may look like a traditional courtroom or may be more modern and less formal.

What happens at an Inquest?

The Coroner's staff will interview witnesses, take statements, and fix a date for the Inquest taking into account the availability of those witnesses the Coroner wishes to be present to give evidence. The Coroner will call the family of the deceased to the Inquest along with those who were involved directly or indirectly with the death.

The family are entitled to have legal representation at the Inquest to represent the interests of the family and ask questions of the witnesses. They're also able to address the Coroner on specific issues, such as the verdict.

In some cases the Coroner will call a Pre-Inquest Review meeting before the Inquest to discuss which witnesses he intends to call and the statements he'll admit as evidence. Again a legal representative is able to attend for the family at this hearing.

What should you expect from the conclusion?

After hearing the evidence the Coroner will record:

- The name of the deceased
- The cause of death
- The time, place and circumstances of the death
- Their verdict / conclusion as to the death

In most cases, Coroners have a limited number of verdicts / conclusions open to them. These include natural causes, unlawful killing, industrial disease, suicide or an open verdict.

In certain cases, the Coroner may decide to give a narrative verdict / conclusion which contains more detail about the events leading up to the death.

What happens after the Inquest?

After the Inquest the family can register the death. We'll also advise on whether a related claim is likely to be successful and can help you through the legal process.

Please bear in mind that any claim for compensation must be brought within three years of the death, or within one year if a human rights claim is to be brought.