



## JOB DESCRIPTION QUESTIONNAIRE (JDQ)

**DIRECTORATE:** Local Policing and Criminal Justice  
**AREA/DEPT:** Criminal Justice  
**SECTION:** Coroner's Department  
**JOB TITLE:** **CORONER'S INVESTIGATION OFFICER**  
**REPORTS TO:** Coroner's Department Manager  
**CURRENT RANK/GRADE:** **GRADE E**  
**DATE:** September 2016

**1. JOB PURPOSE:** (Briefly state your job's overall objectives. To.....")

Investigate sudden, suspicious, unnatural or violent deaths, and all deaths of persons in custody or state detention on behalf of the Senior Coroners, to ensure that they are able to discharge their statutory duties.

**2. PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTABILITIES:**

(Describe the important end results you are expected to achieve).

- a) Gather, collate, record and co-ordinate all evidence in respect of every death reported, to ensure that the coroner is in full possession of all the relevant facts, information and evidence upon which to make fully informed judicial decisions. Conduct interviews and undertake research and, where necessary offer alternative solutions to accessing information to facilitate the holding of an inquest.
- b) Where the Coroner requires a post mortem to be conducted, make arrangements for this to take place. Brief pathologists either personally or in written format with the deceased's medical history and matters relevant to the facilitation of the post mortem, taking into account other interested persons and stakeholders.
- c) Co-ordinate forensic agencies to arrange for analytical testing of pathological specimens taken at autopsy and of samples of medication or other substances seized in the investigation according to the requirements of the Human Tissues Act.
- d) Build and maintain relationships with agencies and organisations that are pivotal in the Coroner's process. Ensure that links are developed with staff at all levels within the Force and with external partners to foster good working relationships, thereby providing a quality service

- e) Liaise with bereaved families to provide professional, compassionate and timely advice to ensure that they are kept fully informed throughout the investigation and understand the processes. Provide support to persons identifying or viewing the deceased.
- f) Provide clear advice and guidance to doctors, pathologists, funeral directors, other interested persons and stakeholders to ensure that the purpose of the Coroner's inquest is understood and that the correct procedures and compliance with legislation is followed. Where UK citizens die abroad, coordinate the Foreign Office, British Embassies and funeral directors to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation.
- g) Coordinate the arrangements for inquests, notify and summons all the relevant parties, book the date and prepare all necessary documentation to ensure that the Coroner is able to conclude the inquest within the timescales prescribed by legislation.
- h) Plan, prepare and deliver bespoke training and presentations in dealing with death, internally i.e. student officers, special constables, Senior Investigating Officer / Family Liaison Officer Courses and externally i.e. prison officers, medical practitioners, H&S officers, charities and support group organisations.
- i) Represent Merseyside Police and HM Coroner at a senior level on external multi-agency panels i.e. Child Death Overview Panels (that exist to review specific cases and work to prevent further preventable deaths) and the Merseyside Resilience Forum (a collaboration of multi-agency services working together to prepare for emergencies on Merseyside.)
- j) Investigate items of treasure trove found by members of the public. Liaise with the British Museum to ascertain identification and value of found items in order to present a report to HM Coroner and arrange inquests as directed.
- k) Arrange and manage inquests at Court and guide bereaved families through the death certification and inquest process.
- l) Make full enquiries into the finding of articles by the public that are suspected of being treasure trove, and arrange for their safe custody.
- m) Be accountable for all Health & Safety issues, to include risk assessment, pertaining to the post holder's area of responsibility in order to fulfil the statutory obligations of the Health & safety at Work Act 1974

- n) Undertake all responsibilities relating to information management, data quality, information sharing, intelligence and information security in accordance with the NPCC Guidance on the Management of Police Information in order to achieve compliance with the Statutory Code of Practice.

**3(a) KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE:**

(What kind of knowledge, skills and experience are necessary to enable satisfactory performance in the job and why are they necessary?).

The postholder should be educated and qualified to NVQ level 4 or equivalent in view of the requirement to produce comprehensive and legally compliant reports, involving investigation and analysis of specialist and complex information.

The postholder should also have either attained the University Certificate in Professional Development in Coroners Law and Bereavement, Medico-legal Death Investigation or Fundamental Medicine for the Coroner or once in post, attend the mandatory Coroner's Officer training as directed by the Chief Coroner, two day course three times per year.

Have the proven experience in an investigative capacity and be familiar with evidential requirements.

Have a detailed knowledge and understanding of medical terminology, human anatomy and physiology in order to be able to ascertain if a death is natural /unnatural; converse with consultants, GPs and other medical practitioners over causes of death; provide advice to pathologists on possible lines of investigation and explain causes of death in layman's terms to bereaved families.

Must be able to conduct investigations into the cause of death if the initial information on the death report is insufficient for a medical practitioner to issue a certificate i.e. know what information is required and how to source and analyse it. The preliminary investigations must be accurate and presented in a specific manner, using the correct procedure and in depth knowledge of the Coroner's system in order to present a reasoned argument with which to negotiate and influence the Coroner.

Ability to assimilate large amounts of information and interpret policy when dealing with investigations, particularly those complex investigations where Article 2 of the Human Rights Act 1988 is engaged.

The post holder will be managing high level stakeholders (e.g. Senior Coroners, pathologists, Consultants, senior police officers) and bereaved families on a daily basis. Excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to tailor communications appropriately are essential.

The post holder will be required to provide clear and detailed explanations for the need for a post mortem, the nature of the post mortem, cause of death or retention of material following an examination. These issues will need to be approached differently in every case.

The post holder must have sufficient knowledge of cultural or religious observances that may impact on decisions regarding post mortems, burial rites or other death or court procedures.

The post holder must balance providing clear, accurate and timely information to enable bereaved people to make fully informed decisions, against the risk of attempting to counsel people.

In the event of a mass fatality which exceeds the resources of the normal infrastructure of the area, be aware of all Major Incident Plans / Temporary Mortuary Contingency Plans and Governmental Resilience Contingency plans. Become a member of the mortuary management team and the main communication link between HM Coroner and the Senior Identification Manager.

Knowledge of all the relevant legislation, rules and regulations, Chief Coroner's guidance and Merseyside Police policies and procedures to ensure that all investigations are legally compliant.

Competent use of Microsoft Office, Internet, electronic diaries and Coroner specific databases.

**3(b)** (Does your post require any Police Powers, and if so what are they, and why are they necessary?)

No

#### **4. RELATIONSHIPS:**

**(a) *Supervisory responsibilities:***

Nil

**(b) *Supervision Received:***

The post holder must work largely unsupervised as the line manager is not site based. They must be able to manage their own casework with minimal guidance. Dependent upon the post holder's knowledge and experience, the line manager will provide guidance or support where necessary for complex investigations, complaints or allegations of misconduct.

The post holder will provide specialist services at a recognised professional level. They will be required to interpret and apply policies and procedures from the commencement of the investigation and take

complex decisions within an agreed framework. They will need to make timely, justifiable decisions when faced with a number of alternatives and have the ability to review and revise these decisions as circumstances and evidence unfold. This is critical as the post holder will be operating as a specialist in this role and working with an absolute minimum of supervision.

(c) ***Other Contacts:***

(i) ***Within North West Region:***

Daily contact with police officers of all ranks with regard to the giving and receiving of information relating to the circumstances of a reported death. Provide guidance to them with regard to the correct standards required when investigating deaths for the Coroner.

(ii) ***Outside North West Region:***

Daily contact – HM Coroner in relation to all reports of death

Daily contact with distressed bereaved families / friends, physicians, pathologists, registrars, nursing homes, GP's, solicitors, funeral directors, local council, social services, hospital legal departments, hospices, crematoria.

Regular contact with all Statutory and Public Authorities including Fire Service, Ambulance, Prisons, Health & Safety, British Transport Police and other Coroners Jurisdictions in England and Wales.

Frequent contact with charities and support groups involved in the care of the bereaved i.e. SAMM (Support After Murder and Manslaughter), Roadpeace, FSiD (Foundation for Sudden Infant death Syndrome), NMPH (National Missing Persons Helpline) and local and national media to give, seek and receive information.

## **5. CONTEXT:**

(a) ***Operating Environment:*** (Services provided, work patterns, who are the customers).

Post holder will normally work Monday to Friday but occasional weekend working will be required. Post holder will work within the Force flexi time scheme.

- (b) **Framework and Boundaries:** (Policies and procedures which affect you and how these can be changed).

Policies and working practices are governed by the rules and legislation pertaining to the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013, Coroner (Inquests) Rules 2013, Treasure Act 1996, Human Rights Act 1988, Common Law, Human Tissue Act 2004 and Codes of Practice 2009, Anatomy Act 1984, Births and Deaths Act and Regulations, Contempt of Court Act 1981, Health & Safety Act 1974. It is also essential to be aware of the Data Protection Act and Disclosure of Evidence where the press or legal representatives are involved.

- (c) **Organisation:** (For each type of post that reports directly to you, outline below the posts overall responsibilities).

N/A

**6. DIMENSIONS:** (Indicate in quantitative terms, key areas on which your job has an impact).

**Financial:** N/A

**Staff:** N/A

**Other:** N/A

**7. JOB CHALLENGES:** (Describe the most challenging or complex parts of your job).

The post holder will be the first and often only point of contact for bereaved people when a death is referred to the Coroner. For the majority of people it is an unfamiliar and daunting process as they find they do not have control over what happens to the body of their relative or friend. This is especially significant if a post mortem is to take place, which can be distressing and contra to cultural beliefs and practices for many people. The post holder will have a profound effect on people who are bereaved and grieving.

The post holder must therefore be an effective communicator with well-developed emotional intelligence to thoroughly conduct enquiries into the death at the same time as working with families. Failure to do so will lead to insufficient enquiries into a death resulting in delays in registering the death and the timing of the funeral. It will create unnecessary distress and compound the grief of bereaved people who are at their most vulnerable. This could result in exposing Merseyside Police or HM Coroner to judicial or other legal proceedings.

The post holder must ensure as smooth a passage as possible for the next of kin through the complexities and emotional turmoil of the Coroner's investigation. They must have the ability to be professionally dissociated from the emotional aspects of dealing with death on a daily basis. They must remain sensitive and

responsive to the needs of bereaved families but at the same time maintain control of the situation and ensure correct procedures are adhered to. This is particularly challenging when dealing with sudden, traumatic or unexpected deaths or the deaths of children and young people.

The post holder must have the ability to work under sustained pressure while maintaining the highest standards of work and meeting strict time limits

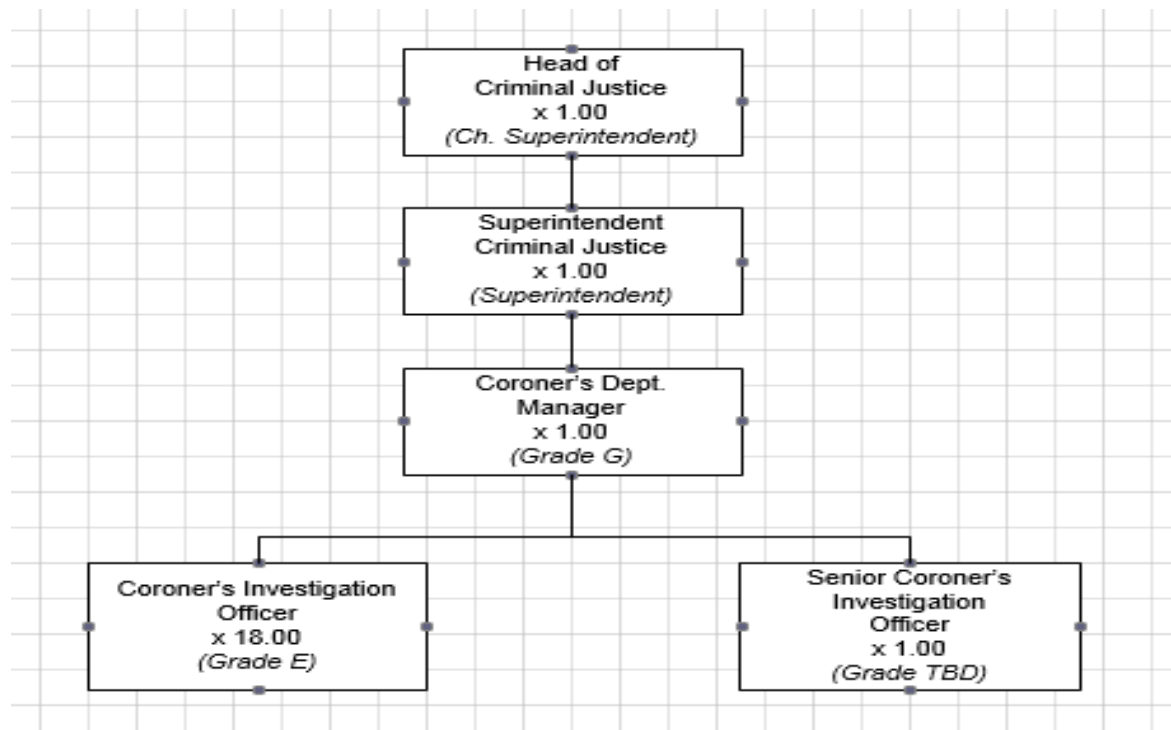
**8. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

(Provide any further information, not included in your previous answers, which you consider would assist others to achieve a better understanding of your job).

Use of the post holder’s own vehicle will be required on occasions. Such use will be compensated at the appropriate mileage rate.

**9. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE:**

(Draw an organisational chart of your Department / Section, indicating the position of your post within it).



**10. AGREEMENT OF QUESTIONNAIRE CONTENT:**

(Please sign when completed)

POSTHOLDER’S NAME:

**(Please print in block capitals)**

POSTHOLDER’S SIGNATURE:

Date:

Extn:

MANAGER’S NAME:

**(Please print in block capitals)**

MANAGER’S SIGNATURE:

Date:

Extn:

