**Candidate Information Pack**

**ASSISTANT CORONER**

**Durham & Darlington Area**

Relevant Authority:

Durham County Council

June 2018

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**ASSISTANT CORONER FOR DURHAM & DARLINGTON**

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

**1. ADVERT**

**Assistant Coroner for Durham and Darlington Coroner Area**

**Fee: £454 per day**

Durham County Council is seeking to appoint up to 2 new Assistant Coroners to serve the coronial area of Durham and Darlington and to support the Senior Coroner.

The role will primarily be based in the dedicated Coroner’s Office at the Civic Centre in Crook, County Durham. Office hours are 8am until 4pm on weekdays. You may also be required to sit at court elsewhere in County Durham

The Council is looking to appoint an Assistant Coroner with significant and recent experience of coroner law and procedures including experience of hearing Article 2 compliant and jury inquests. In relation to the second post, prior experience as an Assistant Coroner is not essential.

You 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

The successful candidate(s), will be required to demonstrate knowledge and experience of coronial law and of basic medicine, have proven skills of conducting investigations and an understanding of court procedure. You should be willing to prepare and hear the whole range of inquests from simple cases to those fully engaging Article 2 both with and without a jury. You will also need to demonstrate the excellent communication and interpersonal skills necessary to deal with sensitive situations.

You will be a barrister or a solicitor or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives and satisfy the judicial-appointment eligibility condition on a 5 year basis, under the age of 70. and be subject to the appointment and eligibility conditions within the [Coroners and Justice Act 2009 (s.23 and Schedule 3)](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/25/notes/division/5/1/1/3/2).

Once a Coroner is appointed they are then a Judicial Office holder until they reach the age of 70 years (compulsory retirement age) unless they chose to resign or are removed by the Lord Chief Justice or Lord Chancellor prior their 70th birthday.

This is a fee paid position although it is likely to involve a regular commitment, which is to be agreed between you, the senior coroner and the local authority.

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 would expect an assistant coroner to offer a minimum of 15 sitting days each financial year. However it is recognised that there is a variance of workload in each area.

Applicants should complete an online application evidencing as appropriate the essential and desirable requirements for the post. In addition, you are required to declare if you are the subject of any complaint or disciplinary proceedings by any professional body to which you belong and which have been upheld, with particulars.

Please review the candidate pack prior to submitting an application using the link below. If you wish to have an informal discussion or arrange a visit, please contact Mr Jeremy Chipperfield on 03000 265556.

**Suitably qualified applicants are invited to apply online at:**[**https://www.northeastjobs.org.uk/**](https://www.northeastjobs.org.uk/)

**Closing date: 13 July 2018**

**Interviews are likely to be held 15 August 2018**

**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 Durham & Darlington Coroner area covers an area of approximately 940 square miles with a current population of around 620,000. It borders the counties of North Yorkshire and Cumbria, together with the Tees Valley and Tyne & Wear.

The number of deaths registered annually is around 6,750 with approximately 3,000 cases referred to the senior coroner. Pathologists at three hospitals in the area, at Durham, Darlington and Bishop Auckland, conduct over 1,000 annual post-mortem examinations. In 2016, 565 inquests were opened, approximately 20% of deaths reported to the coroner. The postholder will be expected to have regard to the Chief Coroner’s guidance on the use of post-mortem examinations.

The coroner area contains sections of the A1(M) motorway as well as the A19 and A66 trunk roads and several major roads . It contains part of the East Coast mainline railway as well as several branch lines. There are three prisons including a maximum security female prison, also ayoung offenders’ institution and two secure centres.

**Office and Court accommodation**

The coroner’s service is located in dedicated accommodation at the Civic Offices in Crook. The Court is also located there, as is one of the County’s Register Offices. It is available Monday – Friday allowing inquests to be opened expeditiously with dates usually set for hearings within the required six months. The Coroner’s Service may also from time to time use accommodation elsewhere in County Durham.

**Staff**

Six coroner’s officers are employed by the Durham & Darlington Police Authority. The Senior Coroner, the Assistant Coroners and the coroner’s officers are supported by one full and four part-time administrative staff employed by Durham County Council, who are co-located with the Senior Coroner at the offices in Crook.

**Management**

Accommodation, contracts, tendering, finance and support staff are managed by Durham County Council, presently through the Corporate Director of Resources.

**Daily operations**

This is a fee paid position although it is likely to involve a regular commitment, which is to be agreed between you, the senior coroner and the local authority.

You must have the flexibility to accommodate such sitting dates at the Area requires, and be available for designated weekend cover and bank holidays, which on occasions, must be set at short notice.

You will work closely with the Senior Coroner, Mr. Jeremy Chipperfield, and you must be able to recognise the importance of continuous professional development (CPD) and your role in your CPD.

**The Coroner Team**

The Senior Coroner, who is an independent judicial office holder, leads a team of coroners including three fee paid assistant coroners, including one nominated deputy in line with the Chief Coroner’s guidance. They provide cover when the Senior Coroner is unavailable due to leave, sickness, training etc. and as additional support in office and case work.

The Senior Coroner takes the lead on coroner work and is expected to hold regular coroner team meetings.

**3. JOB SUMMARY**

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| **Post Title** | **ASSISTANT CORONER** |
| **Service Area** | Directorate of Resources |
| **Contact point:** | Corporate Director of Resources |
| **Location** | Civic Centre, Crook, Co. Durham |

To support the Senior Coroner to deliver a high quality Coroner service to the people of County Durham and Darlington.

**JOB FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. To support the Senior Coroner to provide a high quality coroner service in accordance with statutory provisions, case law and associated guidance issued by the Chief Coroner.
2. To conduct investigations into deaths when made aware that bodies of deceased persons lie within the coroner area and there is reason to suspect that:

-The deceased died a violent or unnatural death;

-The cause of death is unknown; or

-The deceased died while in custody or otherwise in state detention.

1. To determine the identity of the deceased and how, when and where the deceased came by his or her death; decide if a post-mortem examination is necessary and give directions to a pathologist or other appropriately qualified expert medical practitioner; to establish the medical cause of death.
2. Where required, to hold an inquest, with or without a jury, in accordance with Section 7 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and as appropriate, to notify the relevant Registrar of Deaths of the findings and conclusion of the inquest, or the natural cause of death ascertained with or without a post-mortem examination or that the death reported does not require further inquiry or investigation.
3. To provide clear direction to staff on coroner investigations.
4. To be sensitive and, as far as possible, responsive to the needs and requirements of those who engage with the coroner service, including the bereaved, witnesses, medical personnel, police, the media and other stakeholders; and to manage their expectations.
5. To assist the Senior Coroner to ensure that the coroner service has planned for and is prepared for any significant emergencies which may occur or affect the coroner area.
6. To comply with the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013 for 24 hour availability. To take into account the religious and cultural requirements of faith communities.
7. Where necessary to assist the Senior Coroner to engage with the local community, for example giving talks and seeking feedback and views. To collaborate and engage with external agencies and stakeholders as required.
8. To work co-operatively with the local authority staff team and police employees to ensure a safe, harmonious and effective working environment.
9. To deal with claims for treasure when required in accordance with statutory regulations and guidance.
10. To keep an up-to-date working knowledge of coroner law, practice and guidance, and advice staff on developments as appropriate.
11. To undertake compulsory Judicial College and Chief Coroner training as appropriate.
12. To be committed to ensuring expenditure is reasonable and controlled, working closely with the Senior Coroner to regularly monitor expenditure and report possible risk.

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| **ROLE REQUIREMENTS**  | **Essential**  | **Desirable** |
| Applicants must be a barrister,solicitor or fellow of CILEX and satisfy the judicial-appointment eligibility condition on a 5 year basis and be under the age of 70. | **x** |  |
| Thorough, up-to-date knowledge of legislation, case law and guidance relating to Coroner’s duties. | **x** |  |
| Knowledge of structures and procedures of the Police, in particular those relating to the investigation of sudden or suspicious deaths.  | **x** |  |
| Knowledge of the extent to which cultural and religious requirements can be met within the constraints of Coronial law and practice. | **x** |  |
| Knowledge of the organisational structures of local government including an understanding of the challenges facing local government and the coroner service both at present and in the future. | **x** |  |
| An ability to drive the service and be receptive to new ideas, reforms and diverse needs. | **x** |  |
| Ability to work collaboratively with staff and the relevant local authority. | **x** |  |
| IT literacy, excellent verbal and written communication skills, the ability to explain legal and medical terms to people from non-legal or non-medical backgrounds.  | **x** |  |
| Excellent analytical skills and a consistency of decision-making and administrative direction. | **x** |  |
| Ability to work in sensitive situations with a wide range of stakeholders (e.g. bereaved relatives, police officers, medical personnel, mortuary staff, registrars, witnesses and the media). | **x** |  |
| Ability to deal with emotionally charged situations that require sensitive handling and confident/positive judgement.  | **x** |  |
| Full current driving licence (unless disability precludes this) and use of a vehicle for work purposes. |  | **x** |
| Experience of legal work in the coroner jurisdiction (e.g. representing clients at inquest) . | **x** |  |
| Experience of conducting investigative enquiries including demonstrating clarity of thought in identifying issues relevant to the investigation. | **x** |  |
| **Requirements** for applicants who may have coroner experienceIf you have experience of being a coroner it is importantthat the applicant’s coroner experience is provided in detail. The form should therefore require the applicant to state:(a) how many days worked as coroner since appointment;(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 Article 2 inquests conducted.As a fee paid assistant coroner your sitting pattern will be agreed with the senior coroner You will be expected on occasion to be available out of hours. |

### 4. SUMMARY OF TERMS & CONDITIONS OF THE ASSISTANT CORONER

The conditions of service applicable to the post are those set out in Schedule 3, Coroners and Justice Act 2009. You hold office on whatever terms are from time agreed. You will not be an employee of the Local Authority.

**Salary**

This post is fee paid and the current fee is £454 per day.

**Hours of Work**

This is a casual, fee based post and the post holder will be expected to work to meet the needs of the service. It is anticipated that the post holder will be required to work fifteen working days per annum subject to operational requirements.

The Senior Coroner will arrange for an out of hours cover service to comply with The Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013. The Assistant Coroner will be expected to support these arrangements and may be required out of hours and at short notice.

The Assistant Coroner is expected to live within a reasonable travelling distance of the Coroners area for which he/she is appointed.

**Appointments**

The Assistant Coroner position is a fee paid judicial appointment.

**Availability**

The Assistant Coroner must be available to cover for the Senior Coroner in the case of sickness or leave.

**Holiday entitlement**None (this is a fee paid appointment).

**Payment of other expenses**

The Council will pay or reimburse all payments actually made by the Assistant Coroner of items included in the Local Authorities’ schedule of allowance expenses and all other expenses incurred in or about the holding of an inquest, or other enquiries in accordance with the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and associated Rules and Regulations, any policy of the Council, or any subsequent statutory enactments. Except as otherwise provided for the Assistant Coroner may not accept any remuneration or fee in respect of anything done by them in the performance of his or her functions.

**Indemnity**

The Council will indemnify the Assistant Coroner for costs or damages awarded against in the course of legal proceedings in accordance with Regulation 17 of the Coroners Allowances, Fees and Expenses Regulations 2013.

**Notice period**

The Assistant Coroner may resign office by giving notice in writing to the relevant authority but the resignation does not take effect unless and until it is accepted by the authority. The Assistant Coroner will be expected to give three months’ notice of retirement or resignation to enable the Council to put in place cover arrangements.

**Politically restricted post**

This post is politically restricted under the terms of the Schedule 3 Part 4 Coroner and Justice Act 2009.

**The Guide to Judicial Conduct**

The Assistant Coroner will comply with the standards as set out in the Judicial Code of Conduct along with guidance issued by the Chief Coroner of England and Wales.

**5. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS**

**Applications**

You should apply on-line using the application form given. It is important that your supporting statement fully addresses the following criteria as well as the essential criteria in the job summary

1. Leadership and authority.
2. Efficient management and organisation.
3. Up to date knowledge of coroner law and guidance.
4. Coroner skills in the office and in court.
5. Integrity, sound judgment and decisiveness.
6. Collaborative working, with staff, relevant authority, Registrars and police.
7. Communication skills.
8. Sensitivity to diversity and cultural requirements.

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 of their qualifications to the interview.

**Employment checks**

The successful candidate will be required to undergo the Council’s pre-appointment medical screening.

**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. Applicants invited to interview will be required to complete a declaration form. The successful candidate will be required to undergo a DBS check

Applicants must specify in their application if they are or have ever been the subject of any disciplinary or complaint proceedings by any professional body to which they belong or have belonged and clearly explain the outcome.

The candidate should declare any other matters which they believe should be brought to the attention of the Local Authority, particularly bearing in mind the basic set of guiding principles in the Guide to Judicial Conduct.

**Eligibility to work in the UK**

Candidates must be eligible to work in the UK. The successful candidate will be required to provide original evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK.

**Interview**

You will be given a scenario setting out a problem drawn from a likely issue that will arise in post. You will be expected to present your approach to the problem.

**Chief Coroner’s role in the process**

No appointment may be made unless the Chief Coroner and the Lord Chancellor consent to it.

Local authorities appoint coroners but do not employ them. Once appointed a Coroner becomes and remains an independent judicial officer holder.

**6. RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE**

Closing date: 13 July 2018

Candidates shortlisted: w/c 16 July 2018

Interview invitations are expected to be sent out by the end of 27 July 2018

Interview date: w/c 15 August 2018 (provisional)

If you do not hear by 30 July 2018, please contact Sam Thompson on 03000 266196.

We are aiming for the successful candidate to take up post as soon as possible.