

Response ID ANON-YFQS-JN7V-8

Submitted to **Post-implementation review of the coroner reforms in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009**

Submitted on **2015-12-10 08:24:31**

Introduction

What is your name?

Name:

David Bailey

What is your email address?

Email:

drdavidmbailey@gmail.com

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

Royal College of Pathologists

Guide to Coroners Services

Did you receive a copy of the Guide to Coroners Services?

Did you receive a copy of the Guide to Coroners Services?:

N/A

If you received the Guide, did it help you understand the process of investigations and inquests? Why or why not?

If you received the Guide, did it help you understand the process of investigations and inquests? Why or why not?:

N/A

Did you feel the Guide's standards were met? If not, which standards did you feel were not met in your case?

Did you feel the Guide's standards were met? If not, which standards did you feel were not met in your case?:

N/A

The release of bodies and post-mortem examinations

If you experienced a delay in the release of a body, did you receive an explanation from the coroners' office?

If you experienced a delay in the release of a body, did you receive an explanation from the coroners' office?:

N/A

Were you satisfied with the explanation for the delay?

Were you satisfied with the explanation for the delay?:

N/A

If you requested a less invasive post-mortem examination, were you satisfied with the coroner's service? Why or why not?

If you requested a less invasive post-mortem examination, were you satisfied with the coroner's service? Why or why not?:

N/A

Disclosure of information and inquest recordings

If you requested any information or documents during an investigation, was this during or after the investigation, or both?

If you requested any information or documents during an investigation, was this during or after the investigation, or both?:

N/A

Did you receive information as a result of the request?

Did you receive information as a result of the request?:

N/A

Were you satisfied with the information you received?

Were you satisfied with the information you received?:

N/A

If you had to pay a fee for disclosure, do you feel the fee was reasonable?

If you had to pay a fee for disclosure, do you feel the fee was reasonable?:

N/A

If you requested a copy of a recording (audio or transcript) of an inquest, did you receive the recording?

If you requested a copy of a recording (audio or transcript) of an inquest, did you receive the recording?:

N/A

Were you satisfied with the recording (audio or transcript) you received?

Were you satisfied with the recording (audio or transcript) you received?:

N/

Out-of-hours availability

If you tried to contact a coroner outside normal office hours, why was this?

If you tried to contact a coroner outside normal office hours, why was this?:

N/A

Were you able to speak to the coroner's office outside of normal hours?

Were you able to speak to the coroner's office outside of normal hours?:

N/A

Were you satisfied with the response you received to your contact?

Were you satisfied with the response you received to your contact?:

N/A

Notification of inquest arrangements

If you experienced an inquest, were you satisfied with how and when the coroner's office notified you of the inquest arrangements and any subsequent changes?

If you experienced an inquest, were you satisfied with how and when the coroner's office notified you of the inquest arrangements and any subsequent changes?:

N/A

What aspects of the notification were you satisfied or dissatisfied with?

What aspects of the notification were you satisfied or dissatisfied with?:

N/A

Flexibility of inquest and post-mortem examination location

If you requested that an inquest or post-mortem examination be held outside the coroner's area, what was the reason?

If you requested that an inquest or post-mortem examination be held outside the coroner's area, what was the reason?:

N/A

If the coroner requested that an inquest or post-mortem examination be held outside their area, what was the reason given?

If the coroner requested that an inquest or post-mortem examination be held outside their area, what was the reason given?:

N/A

What benefits or problems did you experience as a result of the post-mortem examination or inquest being held, or not being held, outside the coroner's area?

What benefits or problems did you experience as a result of the post-mortem examination or inquest being held, or not being held, outside the coroner's area?:

N/A

Other

Are there any other experiences with a coroner's service since July 2013 that you would like to tell us about?

Are there any other experiences with a coroner's service since July 2013 that you would like to tell us about?:

I am responding as the Vice President for communications for the Royal College of Pathologists. We would like to make a number of points:

1. Some respondents felt that not much had changed in the operation of the coronial system following the 2013 act, other than shortened turnaround times with no added funding to the system to accommodate this acceleration of the process.
2. The act did not address major issue with the system namely, poor remuneration to pathologists for doing coroners autopsies, which mean few people want to do them and the service is beginning to reach crisis point. This must be addressed and the Hutton report which discussed this and other issues should be published publically and acted upon.

Some individual responses as follows:

3. The Coroner's Office (in the region where I work) takes several days to authorise or request a post mortem, and usually authorisations arrive after the mortuary staff has left for the day, hampering the planning of work activities for the next day. Requests for toxicology are addressed slowly and samples linger in the fridge for days, making some tests unhelpful. The Coroner's officers sometimes override the decision of the pathologists on these matters, possibly without understanding that the quality of the final conclusion/reports will suffer. The Coroner sometimes is tempted to use inquests as a forum to discuss communication issues between the bereaved family and doctors (when families are unhappy about care), instead of supporting the adequate hospital offices that could easily deal with issues and arrange meetings and discussions.
4. I think the Act was a great opportunity to have consolidated the relatively poor and often confusing legislation related to tissue retention which is spread across several acts into one. I think the UK deserves a single tissue act with a single regulatory body covering all tissue retention be it consented or medico-legal. This would alleviate the headache that is tissue retention. I hope in my lifetime this could be done. I also think it was a mistake to get rid of medically qualified coroners. I think they bring a different perspective to the table and I for one would have wished for them to have continued. As we start to use imaging for autopsy practice more and more I think we as a nation should be ashamed that we make the relatives pay for the services. This is done under the title of choice – the relatives get offered the choice and choose to pay. But they get no choice in having to have some form of autopsy examination so why should they have to pay for the state investigation of death? The sooner death investigation becomes a centrally funded service available to all in all its forms (as suggested in the Hutton report) similar to Scotland and Northern Ireland we will be better.
5. Apart from these points, we have noticed little difference from the last act. We still have an old fashioned out of date death investigation service for England and Wales which creaks under the financial restraints of local councils.