

Candidate Information Pack

AREA CORONER

Essex

Relevant Authority:

Essex County Council

01/02/2022

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

1. ADVERT

Role: HM Area Coroner

Relevant Authority: Essex

Salary: Up to £105,601 per annum + Local Government Pension

Location: Chelmsford, Essex

Contract: Permanent

Closing Date: 16th March 2022, midnight.

Essex County Council is seeking to appoint a new Area Coroner to bring additional capacity to the existing Essex coronial team. This is an exciting opportunity to become a full-time independent judicial office holder and to work closely with an experienced coronial team which cover a broad and complex geographical location, supporting the Senior Coroner and collaborating between Area Coroners.

Job summary and Responsibilities

The Area Coroner will work closely with the Senior Coroner to provide judicial leadership to the coroner team as well as conducting their own coroner investigations and inquests. The Area Coroner may be nominated deputy for the Senior Coroner when the senior coroner is absent. The Area Coroner will be expected on occasion to be available out of hours on a rota-based system.

Home to 1.4 million people, Essex is the second most populated English county and one of the busiest Coronial Areas in the UK. As a broadly diverse area that benefits from an unspoilt coastline and countryside, desirable market towns, dynamic working opportunities and a varied social and cultural life, the county offers something for everyone. Home to major urban areas including Basildon and Harlow and nationally important infrastructure such as Stansted Airport, the work we do at Essex County Council is both complex and highly interesting. Chelmsford is only 40 mins from London via train, and our facilities include 3 courtrooms including new offices and court accommodation.

We take our responsibilities to our local population very seriously in both life and death. As such, we are committed to providing a sector-leading, compassionate coronial service – and it is here that you could play a vital part in our duties. We are currently looking for an organised individual with good investigative skills to work closely with the coronial team, including the Senior Coroner and Area Coroners, delivering a high-quality and efficient service, that is recognised as a centre of excellence for best practice. For an ambitious and experienced professional this is an excellent opportunity to lead change to improve service delivery and make a difference for the people of Essex.

Essex is a busy Coroner service; the number of reported deaths pa was 6597 in 2021. This is a significant number of reported deaths, due to the geographical size of the jurisdiction as well as its make-up, with a combination of major urban areas as well as rural components and means that Essex is amongst the largest coroner areas in England and Wales.

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.

Knowledge, skills and experience

To excel in this role, you must be a Barrister, Solicitor or Chartered Legal Executive and satisfy the judicial appointment eligibility condition on a five-year basis. You will be under the age of 70 and subject to the appointment and eligibility conditions within the [Coroners and Justice Act 2009 \(s.23 and Schedule 3\)](#). You will also need to demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of the relevant

legislation and you will be adept at holding complex inquests. With well-developed communication skills, you will be able to handle sensitive situations.

In turn, we can offer a desirable benefits package, plus the chance to join a progressive team that will welcome your input. We are always keen to improve the service that we offer and explore new opportunities and better ways of working – making for a particularly fulfilling working life. With the backing of friendly colleagues and a senior management team who will help you excel in the role, you will find a solid work/life balance. So, join us in this progressive role, and share your expertise with a team who are committed to excelling in all that they do.

To discuss this post informally, or for more information as to how to apply please contact Danielle.foster@essex.gov.uk

How to apply:

Please note that the selection interviews are planned to be in County Hall, Chelmsford.

Closing Date: 16th March 2022, midnight.

Proposed Interview Date: 28th April 2022

Equal Opportunities

Essex County Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and expects all employees and volunteers to share this commitment.

We seek the best talent from the widest pool of people as diversity is key to our success.

If you have any queries regarding this role, or require anything further, please contact Danielle.foster@essex.gov.uk

Please email your CV and supporting statement (limited to 2 sides of A4) to Danielle.foster@essex.gov.uk by the specified closing date, March 16th 2022

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 jurisdiction of the Essex Coroner Service includes not only the Essex County Council area, but also that of Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock Councils; making the Essex jurisdiction one of the largest in the country. The service consistently receives a high number of referrals each year.

The coroner area contains sections of the M11 motorway as well as several major A-roads, main rail lines to/from London as well as Stansted and Southend airports. The area includes HMP Chelmsford and Youth Offending Institution.

There are 5 acute hospitals in total located in Basildon, Chelmsford, Colchester, Harlow and Southend-on Sea) as well as several community hospitals. There is a world renowned specialist Burns Unit in Chelmsford and a specialised Cardio Thoracic Centre in Basildon.

Daily Operations and accommodation

The service is located in dedicated accommodation, including offices and court in Seax House, Chelmsford. The coroner's court, which is next to the coroner's offices, is available Monday-Friday

This post will work alongside the existing coronial team, made up of the Senior Coroner and 2 Area Coroners. The service also has 5 Assistant Coroners who work on an occasional basis. 17 coroner's officers are employed by Council as well a small team of administrative staff. In addition, there are two team leaders and a Coroner Service Operations Manager. The Coroner Service as a whole is part of the Council's Place & Public Health function.

Accommodation, contracts, tendering, finance and support staff are managed by the Coroner Service Operations Manager, who is employed by the Council

The Operations Manager works closely with the Area Coroner on the delivery of the service to ensure those affected by the work of the coroner team receive a high-quality service.

All staff are co-located with the Senior Coroner

The Area Coroner will be expected on occasion to be available out of hours on a rota basis.

The administrative support staff are responsible for answering incoming calls from the public on weekdays 9am – 5pm.

3. JOB SUMMARY

The Role of the coroner:

- Coroners are independent judicial office holders. When made aware that a body or bodies of deceased persons lie within the coroner area, the coroner is responsible for conducting investigations and holding inquests when required (with or without a jury) into deaths to determine **who** the deceased was, **when** and **where** the deceased came by his or her death and **how** that death occurred. A referral is made to the coroner when there is reason to suspect that:
 - i. The deceased died a violent or unnatural death;
 - ii. The cause of death is unknown; or
 - iii. The deceased died while in custody or otherwise in state detention.
- Conducting investigations of this kind will include where appropriate directing pathologists and others to determine these answers. Coroners also have a duty to produce Prevention of Future Death reports should an investigation give rise to concerns about future deaths

occurring from the circumstances that caused the death. Coroners also deal with claims for treasure when required in accordance with statutory regulations and guidance.

The overview of the role of an area coroner:

- The area coroner supports the Senior Coroner in providing a high quality coroner service that puts the bereaved at the heart of the process. The area coroner deputises for the senior coroner when the senior coroner is absent and works with the senior coroner to ensure that the day to day running of the jurisdiction takes place to the highest standard. This includes preparing for any significant emergencies which may occur and [where appropriate] to be available to assist with 24 hour availability on a rota basis as well as holding regular team meetings and liaising with stakeholders. The area coroner will assist the senior coroner in submitting annual returns to the Chief Coroner and Lord Chancellor as and when required.

Area coroner Role Responsibilities and Assessment criteria

Assimilating and clarifying information

As an area coroner you will be expected to be able to quickly assimilate information to identify essential issues, seeking clarification where necessary so a clear understanding of this information is gained. This will include possessing the ability to explain legal and medical terms to people from non-legal or non-medical backgrounds.

Assessment criteria

- 1. Excellent analytical skills and a consistency of decision-making and administrative direction.**
- 2. Experience of legal work in the coroner jurisdiction (e.g. representing clients at inquest).**
- 3. The ability to explain complex terms to those from non-legal or non-medical backgrounds.**

Managing work effectively

A large amount of coronial work takes place outside of the court setting and therefore area coroners are expected to work effectively both in the office and whilst conducting court hearings. They will also assist the senior coroner in the management of work across the team as a whole. When sitting area coroners are required to run hearings efficiently to facilitate a fair conclusion, minimise delays and effectively deal with case management. Area coroners must respond calmly and flexibly to changing circumstances and prioritise work effectively to make the most of available resources whilst taking in to account any budgetary considerations as appropriate. Area coroners are committed to ensuring that any expenditure is reasonable and controlled and works to monitor this regularly with the senior coroner.

Assessment criteria:

- 4. An ability to prioritise work effectively to minimise delays.**
- 5. Able to work at speed and under pressure.**
- 6. Demonstrates resilience responding calmly and flexibly to changing circumstances.**
- 7. Is able to assist in managing and leading a team effectively.**

Working with others

An ability to work constructively with others whilst demonstrating an awareness of diversity and showing empathy and sensitivity in building relationships is required in this post. Area coroners must be able to constructively assist the senior coroner in leading members of the coronial team and interact well with bereaved families and external stakeholders (e.g. relatives, police officers, medical personnel, mortuary staff, Registrars, witnesses and the media). Where necessary they

assist the senior coroner to engage with the local community, for example giving talks and seeking feedback and views.

Assessment criteria:

- 8. Must have knowledge of the extent to which cultural and religious requirements can be met within the constraints of coroner law and practice.**
- 9. An ability to drive the service and be receptive to new ideas, reforms and diverse needs.**
- 10. Treats people with respect, sensitivity and in a fair manner without discrimination; ensuring the requirements of those with differing needs are properly met.**

Communicating effectively

Area coroners must be excellent communicators and have the ability to express themselves clearly and authoritatively when required. They must be sensitive and, as far as possible, responsive to the needs and requirements of those who engage with the coroner service and also possess the awareness to manage their expectations of the coroner process. Area coroners must be IT literate and able to provide clear directions to staff on coroner investigations whilst creating a safe, harmonious and effective working environment through co-operative working including supporting the senior coroner with holding team meetings.

Assessment Criteria:

- 11. Excellent verbal and written communication skills.**
- 12. Establishes authority and inspires respect and confidence.**
- 13. Remains calm and authoritative even when challenged.**

Exercising judgement

Area coroners must demonstrate integrity and apply independence of mind to make incisive, fair and legally sound decisions.

Assessment criteria

- 14. Able to deal with emotionally charged situations that require sensitive handling and confident/positive judgement.**
- 15. Experience of conducting investigative enquiries including demonstrating clarity of thought in identifying issues relevant to the investigation.**
- 16. Reaches clear, reasoned decisions objectively, based on relevant law and findings of fact.**

Possessing and Building Knowledge

It is the responsibility of the area coroner to keep an up-to-date working knowledge of coroner law, practice and guidance. Coroners must undertake compulsory Judicial College and Chief Coroner training as appropriate. Area coroners are expected to take part in local training as and when required.

Assessment criteria:

- 17. All applicants must be a barrister or solicitor or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives and satisfy the judicial-appointment eligibility condition which includes a requirement for the candidate to hold a relevant qualification, to have also gained experience in the law for a total period of at least 5 years *whilst holding that qualification* and be under the age of 70: paragraph 3 of Schedule 3.**
- 18. Thorough, up to date knowledge of legislation, case law and guidance relating to coroner's duties.**
- 19. Knowledge of structures and procedures of the police, in particular those relating to the investigation of sudden or suspicious deaths.**
- 20. Knowledge of the organisational structures of local government including an understanding of the challenges facing local government, both at present and in the future.**

21. Experience of holding inquests, including jury inquests.

22. Previous experience as an area or assistant coroner

Please detail your coroner experience and confirm the following:

- (a) how many days worked as coroner;
- (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 Jury inquests conducted.
- (h) experience of digital case management systems.

Desirable criteria:

23. Full current driving licence (unless disability precludes this) and use of a vehicle for work purposes.

4. SUMMARY OF TERMS & CONDITIONS OF THE AREA CORONER

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

[the following section contains some general terms and conditions in relation to this post, a full list of recommended terms and conditions is available upon request]

Salary

The annual salary for the post is Up to £105,601 per annum for a basic 40 hour a week together with the provision of an out of hours service The salary provision includes working on occasion out of hours on a rota basis.

Pension Scheme

An Area Coroner may join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) in accordance with any provisions relating to coroner appointments as applied to that scheme.

Travelling Distance to work

The Area Coroner is normally expected to live within one hour travelling distance of the office and to work on a daily basis during the week in the office provided.

Holiday entitlement

The Area Coroner will be expected to take an annual leave entitlement of 30 days (excluding bank holidays and public holidays).

Sick Pay

The Area coroner is entitled to full sick pay (subject to medical evidence) and the local authority will provide assistant cover during the period of sickness to meet the needs of the Area.

Payment of expenses

Expenses will be paid in line with the Council's expenses policy.

Indemnity

The Council will indemnify the Area Coroner for costs or damages in relation to legal proceedings in accordance with Regulation 17 of The Coroners Allowances, Fees and Expenses Regulations 2013.

Notice period

The Area Coroner may resign from office by giving notice in writing to the relevant authority, however the resignation does not take effect unless and until it is accepted by the authority.

Politically restricted post

This post is politically restricted under the terms of Schedule 3, paragraph 4 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

The Guide to Judicial Conduct

The Area Coroner will comply with the standards as set out in the Guide to Judicial Conduct and other associated guidance.

5. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS

Applications

To apply for this position, you are required to submit a CV, a full supporting statement of up to two sides of A4 (no smaller than font 11). It is important that your supporting statement fully addresses the assessment criteria detailed in **bold** in the job summary section above.

In particular please demonstrate how you meet the following criteria:

- 1. Assimilating and clarifying information**
- 2. Managing work efficiently**
- 3. Working with others**
- 4. Communicating effectively**
- 5. Exercising judgement**
- 6. Possessing and Building Knowledge**

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.

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.

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. All applicants will be required to complete a declaration form when they attend for interview .

The successful candidate will be required to undergo a DBS check.

Applicants must specify in the attached [declaration form](#) if they are the subject of any complaint or disciplinary proceedings by any professional body to which they belong (including personal conduct referred to the Judicial Conduct Investigations Office) and to declare any criminal convictions Applicants are asked to declare anything about themselves including in their past that might be an embarrassment to the Local Authority, the Chief Coroner or the Lord Chancellor particularly bearing in mind the basic set of guiding principles in the Guide to Judicial Conduct:

<https://www.judiciary.uk/publications/guide-to-judicial-conduct/>

Please include this declaration form in your application to Danielle.foster@essex.gov.uk alongside your CV and covering letter.

Interview

You will be required to undertake a short presentation as part of the interview process. You will also be sent a WAVE professional styles psychometric questionnaire in advance of your interview.

Chief Coroner's role in the process

The Chief Coroner or his nominee will be providing advice to the Council throughout the recruitment process, in particular so as to ensure that the process is fully transparent and fair. Although the Chief Coroner or his nominee may be at the interviews they are not a member of the panel and as such have no role in scoring candidates or voting for a candidate.

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

Once appointed a Coroner becomes and remains an independent judicial officer holder.

6. RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE

Suitably qualified applicants are requested to email their CV and supporting statement to: Danielle.foster@essex.gov.uk

Closing date: **16th March 2022, midnight**

Interview invitations will be sent out: **w/c 4th April 2022**

Interview date: **28th April 2022, County Hall, Chelmsford.** (please note, interviews may be virtual should the circumstance at the time prohibit face to face interviews)

If you do not hear by 15th April 2022, please assume you have not been shortlisted.

The interview panel will be:

Lincoln Brookes: Senior Coroner for Essex

Suzanna Shaw: Director, Customer

Katie Dulieu: People Business Partner

Observing: Chief Coroner or nominee

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