

NOTICE FOR PRESS

CORONER'S COURT

Coroners Courts remain operational during the pandemic and are open to both the public and the press. Like the courts in other jurisdictions measures have been put in place to allow the public and press to attend in a socially distanced and safe environment.

Inquests and pre-inquest reviews are being conducted through partially remote hearings with some participants attending in person, some remotely through Microsoft Teams and some (where neither personal attendance or MS Teams is appropriate or available) through an audio link.

In order to facilitate Interested persons to participate in an inquest and witnesses to give evidence through a live video link (MS Teams) the Coroner uses both statutory provision and their inherent common law powers. The law prohibits any other person to attend an inquest in this way.¹

There is an additional prohibition in respect of audio devices or links being utilised to listen to inquest proceedings.²

If a Coroner determines it to be appropriate in a particular case for an individual to utilise an audio link, the Coroner is required to specifically vary the effect of the Act by disapplying it for that particular hearing.

It is for that reason that such an order will be made only in exceptional circumstances.

Members of the press wishing to report on openings or inquests are expected therefore to attend in person.

If press cannot attend in person and there is an exceptional reason for them not being able to do so, the Coroner will consider an application by the press for an audio link BUT any application will only be considered if made on notice, no less than 24 hours before the hearing and if the inquest is to be heard on a Monday, by 12pm the Friday before.

What constitutes an exceptional reason is not defined and will be determined by the Coroner on a case by case basis but press convenience or staffing limitations will not constitute an exceptional reason.

Should the courts be compelled to close to the press as a result of lockdown restrictions being imposed, provisions for press reporting will be communicated through the Kent Coroners' inquests website.



**Patricia Harding
Senior Coroner
Mid Kent & Medway
Central & South East Kent
North East Kent**



**Roger Hatch
Senior Coroner
North West Kent**

¹ S41 Criminal Justice Act 1925

² S9 Contempt of Court Act 1981