MILLS & REEVE
Achieve more. Together.

Briefing: Remote inquest hearings - Top tips to support you

Introduction 1
Overview 1
Tips on remote participation 1
The location/rooms 1
Preparing for the first day of your remote hearing 2
Mills & Reeve inquest support 2
Contacts 3

Introduction

This briefing is intended to support health and care professionals preparing for and dealing with remote inquest hearings following a Coroner's decision to hold a hearing remotely. Although many inquests are now held in person, it is not uncommon for more straightforward inquests to be heard remotely, or for individual witnesses to be given permission to attend remotely even though the Coroner is sitting in person. We include some tips to help you manage remote participation effectively and professionally. It is hoped that these tips will help reduce the extra layer of anxiety presented by preparing and attending a remote inquest hearing.

Tips on remote participation

The location/rooms

You should establish with the Coroner's officer whether participants need to be in the same room or can dial in separately – this will help you work out your location and room requirements. Remember the room(s) need to be secure and as far as possible ensure that there is no background noise. Participants in hearings should mute their microphones when not speaking.

Some Coroners may require all witnesses from each IP and their legal representatives to be in the same room and on the same video-link. Equally, if a Coroner's preference is for each IP and representatives to sit in separate rooms, ensure that you have a list of mobile numbers for all participants to enable you to take instructions and provide support during the hearing if you need to.

In preparing for giving evidence remotely there are a number of issues to consider:

- If an individual can have someone to support them in the room they are giving evidence in.
- Check if witnesses have particular concerns about giving evidence remotely - for some this may prove to be less daunting than giving evidence at court and for others the use of the technology itself may cause concerns.
- Check whether witnesses require arrangements to be made if they are giving evidence at home: is there a private and secure place available?

Preparing for the first day of your remote hearing

Here is a checklist to work through:

- Check your technology: is your device fully charged, is the Wi-Fi suitable and do you have easy access to the Coroner's video-links?
- Do you have mobile numbers for each witness?
- Identify where your witnesses will sit in relation to the legal representative in your room.
- Make sure you have access to all the necessary documentation: witness statements, medical records and the Coroner's hearing bundle.
- Ensure you have the printed wording of the oath and affirmation for witnesses to read before giving evidence. If witnesses choose to take the oath then they also need to have physical access to the relevant holy book upon which to place their hand when doing so.
- Ensure that you have a sign to display 'Inquest hearing in progress' outside your room(s).
- Check in with witnesses and ensure that they will be ready to join the video link some 20 minutes before the start time of the hearing to tease out any connectivity problems. Do remind witnesses to mute themselves, turn off their video when waiting for the inquest to commence and to remember to unmute themselves and turn their video back on at the Coroner's direction.
- Ensure witnesses are aware that they must not speak about their evidence while the hearing is 'off-line' if they are in the middle of giving their evidence.

Of particular interest to witnesses is our briefing on attending the Coroner's court as a witness and how to give evidence.

Mills & Reeve inquest support

Visit our inquest support webpage for guidance and short videos to help you prepare for and navigate the coronial process.

Explore our inquest support resources
Watch our inquest videos

Contacts

Feel free to contact our inquest specialists at any time.



Neil Ward
Partner
T: +441214568202
M: +447918287141
E: neil.ward@mills-reeve.com



Duncan Astill
Partner
T: +441223222477
M: +447974949723
E: duncan.astill@mills-reeve.com



Claire Bridgman
Principal Associate
T: +441214568467
M: +447552489395
E: claire.bridgman@mills-reeve.com



Ed Wrightson
Senior Associate
T: +441612348783
M: +447467997876
E: ed.wrightson@mills-reeve.com

Mills & Reeve LLP is a limited liability partnership authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority and registered in England and Wales with registered number OC326165. Its registered office is at 7th & 8th floors, 24 King William Street, London, EC4R 9AT, which is the London office of Mills & Reeve LLP. A list of members may be inspected at any of the LLP's offices. The term "partner" is used to refer to a member of Mills & Reeve LLP.
The contents of this document are copyright © Mills & Reeve LLP. All rights reserved. This document contains general advice and comments only and therefore specific legal advice should be taken before reliance is placed upon it in any particular circumstances. Where hyperlinks are provided to third party websites, Mills & Reeve LLP is not responsible for the content of such sites.
Mills & Reeve LLP will process your personal data fairly and lawfully in accordance with professional standards and the Data Protection Act 2018, General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (as applicable) and any other applicable laws relating to the protection of personal data and the privacy of individuals. You can set your marketing preferences or unsubscribe at any time from Mills & Reeve LLP marketing communications at www.preferences.mills-reeve.com or by emailing preferences@mills-reeve.com T +44(0)344 880 2666