



CHIEF CORONER

GUIDANCE No.2

LOCATION OF INQUESTS

1. Section 5(2) of the Coroners Act 1988 ('the 1988 Act') provided that a coroner should hold inquests only within his district'. There is no equivalent provision in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 ('the 2009 Act'). This is a deliberate omission. The explanatory note to section 24 of the 2009 Act ('Provision of staff and accommodation') states that:

"The Act allows inquests to be held anywhere in England and Wales so that there is new flexibility if particular inquests have requirements for the sort of accommodation which is not available within the coroner's own area. The expectation will be, however, that an inquest is normally held within the area of the coroner who is conducting the investigation".

2. Originally the Government had intended to repeal section 5(2) alongside the majority of the other provisions in the 1988 Act when the 2009 Act came into force in July 2013. However, given the restrictive nature of section 5(2) and the difficulties it was causing in a number of inquests where suitable accommodation was not available within the coroner's district but might be available in another district, the Government has decided to bring forward the repeal to 12 February 2013.
3. The effect of this change is that coroners are able to hold an inquest (or part of an inquest) outside the district to which they are appointed. As the explanatory note to section 24 of the 2009 Act makes clear, the expectation is that inquests should normally be held within the coroner's district but where there are exceptional circumstances, such as a lack of available and appropriate court space for a jury inquest, or where it may be in the best interests of bereaved relatives to hold the inquest at a different location, then the inquest could be heard outside the coroner's district.
4. In reaching a decision on the venue for an inquest in such exceptional circumstances, the coroner should take due account, as with all the other inquest arrangements, of the views of interested persons including bereaved relatives and the distances they may have to travel to attend the inquest.

HH JUDGE PETER THORNTON QC
CHIEF CORONER

4 September 2013