

Coroners Inquests - Writing a statement

Section 1: Introduction

The role of a witness in a Coroner's inquest is to assist the Coroner in the conduct of the investigation. Remember this when compiling a statement. A thorough and well written witness statement means you will be better prepared to attend the inquest hearing or that you may not be summonsed.

Section 2: Writing a statement

Keep it professional. Statements should be typed and on headed paper. A suggested template is included below although your Trust/organisation may have a preferred structure.

Make clear the capacity in which you are making the statement. This will usually be as a professional witness i.e. witness to fact (as opposed to an expert witness).

Access to the medical records is essential and other documents may be helpful (incident report forms, theatre lists, ward diary, duty rotas, protocols etc.).

Be honest, giving the impression that you are concealing facts or misleading the court can lead to serious consequences. Remember you have a duty of candour.

Be clear what you cannot remember.

Avoid hearsay or second hand reporting.

Stick to the facts, do not speculate. Interpretation is the purpose of the inquest.

Be concise and clear, avoiding jargon or abbreviations. Explain medical terminology including medication and what it is used for. Write as if for an intelligent lay person. This will be appreciated by the Coroner and the family.

Try to deal with any errors or omissions – this is an opportunity to explain why something was not done.

Look at the overall impact of your statement. Does it allow the reader to visualise how events occurred?

A statement is discloseable in law. Do not write anything in a way that you would regret hearing if discussed in another venue later.

Get your report right, don't rush it or do it at the end of a busy shift.

Seek advice if you have concerns.

Read your statement through, make any changes you feel are necessary, and only sign it when you are completely happy with what it says and how it says it. This is your statement.

Include a statement of truth, sign and date, and send to the Coroner with a covering letter. This should be with the knowledge and agreement of the trust, usually the Medical Director or Director of Nursing.

Keep a copy.

Remember the Coroner will ask for a statement if they want your help; it does not imply you have done something wrong.