



CHIEF CORONER

**GUIDANCE No.19**

**MENTORS FOR CORONERS**

1. The purpose of this guidance is to notify all coroners that mentoring is available to them should it be required.
2. Mentors will usually be senior coroners or other coroners of considerable experience who agree to take on this role. On occasions the mentor may be a Judge or retired senior coroner. The Chief Coroner's office will maintain a list of volunteer mentors who are approved by the Chief Coroner.
3. This scheme is not to be confused with the appraisal scheme that has been running since April 2019 for assistant coroners. The mentor allocated will be different to the senior coroner who carries out the appraisal of assistant coroners in their area.
4. When required mentors should be available to support, advise and assist coroners on a confidential basis.
5. Mentoring will most often be required in one of the following circumstances:
  - (1) where a coroner (usually an assistant coroner) requests mentoring assistance,
  - (2) where the Chief Coroner or a senior coroner believes that mentoring would assist a coroner (this could be a learning and development point identified during an appraisal)
  - (3) where, following a complaint to the Judicial Conduct Investigations Office being upheld, the Lord Chief Justice requests the Chief Coroner to assist.
  - (4) Where the Chief Coroner or a recently appointed area or senior coroner believes it would assist a coroner with judicial and leadership development
6. Mentors will not be automatically available for all newly appointed or other coroners but on an as-and-when required basis. Newly appointed assistant coroners will be informed by the Chief Coroner's office that mentoring is available on request.
7. A coroner seeking assistance should contact the Chief Coroner's office via email: [chiefcoronersoffice@judiciary.uk](mailto:chiefcoronersoffice@judiciary.uk). The coroner will be assigned a mentor by the Chief Coroner's office from the approved list (with the mentor's consent). The

reason for the request will remain confidential (and therefore not be known by the Chief Coroner's office) if the coroner so wishes. However, disclosure of any reasons for the request for a mentor will assist in assigning a suitable mentor who may have specialist knowledge in a particular area.

8. The allocation of a mentor may depend on the nature of the assistance required. Senior coroners will of course always be available to advise and support all coroners in their team predominantly through the assistant coroner appraisal scheme, and general support and assistance should be given by the senior coroner to coroners in their jurisdiction. Assistance is particularly relevant for newly appointed area coroners and assistant coroners: see Chief Coroner's Guidance No.20 *Key Skills for Assistant Coroners*. Mentoring is intended to provide an additional layer of advice and support in addition to the appraisal scheme.
9. The nature and extent of the mentoring will depend on the circumstances. Normally, mentoring for assistant coroners will last for no longer than 12 to 24 months.
10. Mentors should be willing to give sufficient time (but not disproportionate time) to the process and to make arrangements, where appropriate, for the coroner to increase his/her experience with training at other coroner offices and courts.
11. Mentors should listen without being judgmental. They should be constructive and positive and should ask questions so as to allow the coroner where possible to reach his/her own acceptable decisions.
12. Mentoring is intended to be a supportive process and should not be seen in any circumstances as punitive.
13. When providing mentoring assistance, the mentor will set out the parameters of the assistance which may be given. Apart from the request to the Chief Coroner's office for mentoring, the nature and extent of the assistance given will be confidential and will not be shared with others without the agreement of both parties.
14. It is a matter for the individual coroner who is being mentored whether they disclose details of their mentoring to their senior coroner who is appraising them. However, disclosure is encouraged so that any learning and development points may be suitably given.
15. Coroners being mentored should understand that occasionally circumstances may arise in which the mentor cannot sustain confidentiality, for example where the mentor learns of a matter which may provide grounds for removal from office for incapacity or misbehaviour. If that arises the mentor should discuss the matter with the coroner and, where appropriate, refer the details to the Chief Coroner. Examples of where a referral to the Chief Coroner would take place include taking drugs or drinking heavily, criminal offences, serious professional misconduct, obvious racial or other serious prejudice, mental or physical illness affecting ability to perform the role of coroner, bankruptcy or anything which may bring the role of coroner into serious disrepute.
16. Welfare issues may also be raised by coroners seeking assistance from local authority HR teams. These teams should be able to provide free and independent advice and referral. The service provided by the HR Team at the

Judicial Office, which provides support for judges, is not available to coroners, although the Judicial Helpline (0800 021 7821) is now available free of charge to all coroners.

**HH JUDGE MARK LUCRAFT QC**  
**CHIEF CORONER**  
**19 October 2015**  
**Revised 11 December 2019**