



Amicus comments on the Coroners Service Reform Bill

Amicus is the UK's second largest trade union with 1.2 million members across the private and public sectors. Our members work in a range of industries including manufacturing, financial services, print, media, construction and not for profit sectors, local government, education and the NHS.

1. Amicus welcomes proposals that will professionalise the Coroner Service, making Coroners a full time appointment, with legal qualification and medical support.
2. Amicus is in favour of increasing Coroners' powers to call for evidence, enter premises to search and seize property, and to deal with large accidents and disasters.
3. Amicus supports the creation of the post of Chief Coroner, thereby giving national leadership to the Coroner Service.
4. The accountability of the Coroner Service is currently insufficient Accordingly Amicus supports the proposals to give the bereaved the right to challenge a doctor's decision on death certificates, to contribute to Coroners' investigations, to ask Coroners for a second opinion, and the right to a review of a Coroners' decision.
5. Amicus rejects the proposal that juries should no longer be mandatory in workplace deaths. Amicus believes that all workplace deaths should be given a full inquest with a jury. A new law on Corporate Accountability is imminent, which makes it imperative that all deaths that may come under

this new law are fully investigated and done so in an open forum ie with a jury. Juries act as a balance for the overwhelming presence of professionals and specialists at an inquest and keep the testimony and proceedings at a level the public, the bereaved and the press can comprehend.

6. Amicus does not support the proposal that would allow a Coroner investigation to cease where other proceedings (for eg Police or Health & Safety Executive (HSE)) appear likely to resolve the issue. The purpose of a Coroner inquest is to investigate how a death has occurred and Coroner inquests often go further in establishing underlying causes of a death than Police or HSE investigations. Such other investigations are also not subject to the involvement of the bereaved, and this could leave them out of the process, contrary to one of the main aims of the reform of the Coroner Service.

7. Amicus does not support the proposal to remove the automatic duty of Coroners to investigate deaths of British citizens abroad. This is certain to have a significant impact on the investigation of workplace deaths of British citizens working outside the UK.

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