

Judicial Communications Office

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LEGACY INQUEST REVIEW

Press Release

Mrs Justice Keegan, the Presiding Coroner, today held a listing of all the outstanding legacy inquests in the Royal Courts of Justice, Belfast. The purpose was to provide an update on the work that is being taken forward by the Legacy Inquest Unit to progress the legacy inquests following the announcement that funding is being provided to implement the Lord Chief Justice's plan.

Mrs Justice Keegan spoke about the review she is leading to follow up on the work undertaken by Lord Justice Weir when he carried out a comprehensive review of the legacy cases in February 2016. She announced that she intends to carry out preliminary hearings in each case in September 2019 to establish the state of readiness and to consider the approach that may be taken in relation to the sequencing of inquest hearings. The legal representatives for the families and the relevant agencies have been asked to provide an update on each case to the Presiding Coroner in advance of these hearings.

The Presiding Coroner said she is keen to ensure that legacy inquest cases are prepared for hearing expeditiously and that disclosure issues are identified early and, through collaboration and dialogue, that reasonable and proportionate solutions are found.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Information about legacy inquests can be found on the JudiciaryNI website (<https://judiciaryni.uk/legacy-inquests>)
2. An inquest is an inquiry into the circumstances of a death. The purpose of the inquest is to find out who the deceased person was and how, when and where they died and to provide the details needed for their death to be registered. It is not a trial. It is not for the Coroner to decide, or appear to decide, any question of criminal or civil liability or to apportion guilt or attribute blame.
3. Article 2 of the European Convention of Human Rights imposes a positive duty to investigate deaths in which State agents may be implicated. The European Court of Human Rights has established that in order to satisfy the requirements of Article 2, any investigation must be independent, prompt and proceed with reasonable expedition, be open to public scrutiny, involve the next of kin of the deceased and be capable of leading to a determination of whether any force used was justified and to the identification and punishment of those responsible for the death. Case law has determined that an inquest satisfies this investigatory obligation.

ENDS

If you have any further enquiries about this or other court related matters please contact:

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