



Shared Insights

Mental health patients: Learning from incidents and inquests

Samantha Paxman, Browne Jacobson

Sarah Stork, Browne Jacobson

Dr Asim Yusuf, Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Mandy Ford, Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Dr Sally Arnold, Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

9 November 2021

Themes arising from inquests

Sam is a senior member of Browne Jacobson's Barristers team which provides nationwide advocacy services. She has extensive experience representing public bodies at complex inquests including those

Experiences and learning from participating in RCAs

Dr Yusuf is a
Consultant
Psychiatrist and
Clinical Director

The clinician's perspective – preparing for and attending inquest

Dr Sally Arnold is a General Adult Psychiatrist. She spoke about her experience of attending an inquest relating to a patient she had treated whilst in her third year of psychiatry training. She shared her learning and practical tips about preparation and supporting staff.

Introduction

The inquest (the first Dr Arnold had attended) was 3 years after the patient had passed away. Dr Arnold admitted the patient to the ward and the patient sadly ended their life on the ward the following day.

She was asked to give an account for the RCA but was not involved in the debrief and only discovered the manner in which the patient had ended their life at the time of the Inquest.

Dr Arnold explained **the extensive planning** she undertook for the inquest to ensure the process went as well as possible. These are her top tips:

1. **Mindset** - witnesses are there to help the Coroner - try and answer the Coroner's questions to the best of your ability. Remember the family are grieving, and their anger towards the Trust can be a reflection of this.
2. **Work closely with the trust legal team**. Ask for specific documents, including incident reports, internal investigation documents, statements from other witnesses and a copy of the observation record. If Trust policies have been updated, ask for a copy of the versions in place at the time.

3. Sally asked her consultant to read her statement and provide constructive feedback. He also attended the inquest to provide **moral support and feedback** afterwards for future learning.
4. **Note any issues identified** when preparing your witness statement and any specific points you know you will be asked about, and what you did at the time.
5. Sally called the clinical director beforehand to discuss

Case Study – Learning from a difficult case

Summary of discussion & Resources

A number of points were discussed during the call including:

- The future of CPA

- The importance of record keeping and the difficulties of staff not having enough time to make adequate notes. Samantha

Contact us

Birmingham office

Victoria House
Victoria Square
Birmingham
B2 4BU

+44 (0)121 237 3900
+44 (0)121 236 1291

Exeter office

1st Floor
The Mount
72 Paris Street
Exeter
EX1 2JY

+44 (0)370 270 6000
+44 (0)1392 458801

London office

15th Floor
6 Bevis Marks
London
EC3A 7BA

+44 (0)20 7337 1000
+44 (0)20 7929 1724

Manchester office

3rd Floor
No.1 Spinningfields
1 H g0 G[(3)] TJETQMC \$pa9ETQMC \$pa9ED 17505



Please note:

The information contained in this document is correct as of the original date of publication.

The information and opinions expressed in this document are no substitute for full legal advice, it is for guidance only.

[2021] ©