

Alison Hewitt

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Alison Hewitt has specialised in inquests and coronial law for nearly 20 years and is recognised as a leading barrister in the field, being recommended as a Band 1 Individual for Inquests and Public Inquiries by Chambers UK. She is a Specialist Editor of Jervis on Coroners.

Alison acts regularly as Counsel to the Inquest in complex, high-profile and sensitive investigations, and represents a wide range of clients, including police forces, prisons, NHS Trusts, care homes, and coroners, in inquests and associated judicial review and civil proceedings.

She also has a significant police law practice which covers civil claims, judicial review and misconduct proceedings, as well as public inquiries and inquests, and she maintains her long-term personal injury practice. Additionally, she undertakes regulatory work and is a legal advisor to the General Dental Council.

Examples of prominent matters in which Alison has acted include: the **Ian Tomlinson Inquest**, the **Jimmy Mubenga Inquest**, the **Poppi Worthington Inquest**, the **Surrey Puppy Farm Murders Inquests**, the **Shipman Inquiry**, the **Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse**, and **R (Maughan) v HM Coroner for Oxfordshire** (the Supreme Court consideration of the standard of proof for suicide and unlawful killing conclusions in inquests).

Alison was appointed HM Senior Coroner for the City of London (a part-time post) in 2016 and also sits as an Assistant Coroner in Surrey.

Expertise

Inquests

In 2002 Alison represented two Coroners at the **Shipman Inquiry** and her particular interest and expertise in coronial law and procedure grew from there. She is ranked in Band 1 for Inquests and Public Inquiries by Chambers UK who record that clients consider Alison to have “... a complete grasp of the material, is technically very good and her advocacy is superb” and is “A fantastic coronial lawyer. She has become the go-to for coroners and is a good cross-examiner and real delight to work with in a case” (2020).

Alison has extensive and wide-ranging inquest experience and is a Specialist Editor of **Jervis on Coroners** (14th Ed.). She pioneered the role of “Counsel to the Inquest”, having first acted in that capacity in 2004 in the long-running inquest into the death of **Robbie Powell** Deceased. Since then she has fulfilled the role in over 20 further lengthy, complex, high-profile and sensitive inquests, including those into the deaths of **Ian Tomlinson** and **Poppi Worthington**. Her other clients include Chief Constables of Police, private prisons, doctors and NHS Trusts, care homes, local authorities, child care agencies, construction companies and other employers, and families.

As a result of all her work, Alison is able to advise on all aspects of coronial matters, although she has a particular expertise for complex inquests involving state agencies.

These include deaths in custody, deaths involving the Police or following restraint, deaths resulting from domestic violence, and deaths raising issues as to the clinical care provided for physical or mental illness.

Notable Inquests cases

R (Maughan) v HM Senior Coroner for Oxfordshire [2020] UKSC 46

Appeared on behalf of the Respondent, HM Senior Coroner for Oxfordshire. The appeal was primarily concerned with the standard of proof to be applied at an inquest when considering the short-form conclusion of “Suicide” and whether that standard differs if the relevant facts are recorded in a “Narrative Conclusion”.

Aligny Godinho [Ongoing]

Counsel to the Inquest for HM Senior Coroner for Surrey. The Deceased was murdered by her husband and the investigation relates to the role of the police and others in protecting her life.

Karen Williamson [Ongoing]

Representing Sodexo JS in relation to this death in custody.

Madala Washington [Ongoing]

Counsel to the Inquest for HM Senior Coroner for Surrey. The investigation is concerned with the fatal stabbing of the Deceased whilst in prison.

Fiona Hughes [Ongoing]

Representing Sodexo FM, the provider of university accommodation, in relation to the death of student who died there of meningococcal disease.

Spencer Ashworth [2020]

Counsel to the Inquest for HM Senior Coroner for Avon. Concerned with the death of a young man who was shot and killed by Avon and Somerset Police.

Daniel Cuffe [2020]

Counsel to the Inquest for HHJ Philip Katz QC sitting as Assistant Coroner for Hertfordshire. The Deceased died after being restrained by police in the course of a drug search of his home and swallowing a quantity of drugs.

Christine and Lucy Lee (The Surrey Puppy Farm Murders Inquests) [2019]

Counsel to the Inquests for HM Senior Coroner for Surrey. The investigation concerned the fatal shooting of a mother and daughter and the role of Surrey Police in permitting the perpetrator to hold a shotgun licence despite known risks.

Annabella Landsberg [2019]

Acting for Sodexo Justice Services, the operator of the prison where the Deceased died following a period of 21 hours lying on her cell floor.

Paul Chin [2019]

Representing a Care Home in which the Deceased, who was a bariatric young man, died from an acute illness. The investigation explored wide-ranging and contentious concerns raised by the family about his placement in the Home and his treatment and care.

Helen Loveday [2018]

Representing the Chief Constable of Norfolk in a case in which the Deceased was reported as distressed and missing, and was struck and killed by the vehicle of the

police officers who were attending the call.

Gracie Foster [2018]

Representing an NHS Trust and its medical staff in relation to the death of a 4 year old who was discharged from hospital and died shortly afterwards.

Terrence Smith [2018]

Counsel to the Inquest for HM Senior Coroner for Surrey. An 11 week inquest into the death of a man suffering excited delirium who died under police restraint whilst detained under section 136 of the Mental Health Act.

Poppi Worthington [2017]

Counsel to the Inquest for HM Senior Coroner for Cumbria. The Deceased was a 13 month old baby whose cause of death raised complex medical, pathological and factual issues.

Michael Thompson [2017]

Five week inquest before HM Senior Coroner for Southwark. The Deceased suffered mental health difficulties and died after setting fire to his flat whilst awaiting a Mental Health Act assessment. Represented the Approved Mental Health Professional and the London Borough of Bromley.

Cerys Yemm and Matthew Williams [2017]

Counsel to the Inquest for HM Senior Coroner for Gwent. Shortly after being released from prison Matthew Williams assaulted and killed Cerys Yemm. He died shortly afterwards after being restrained and tasered by the police.

Susan Norman [2016]

Counsel to the Inquest for HM Coroner for Cornwall. An inquest concerned with the death of a woman killed in a landslide on to her home which raised long-term planning issues in relation to the County Council.

Zane Gbangbola [2016]

Counsel to the Inquest for HM Senior Coroner for Surrey. This inquest concerned the death of a 7 year old boy who died as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Kamal Nour [2016]

Representing the Chief Constable of Norfolk in a case in which the Deceased killed himself whilst “under siege” from the police.

Van Hagan [2016]

Representing Birmingham City Council’s Children’s Department. This was an inquest into the drug related death of a mother who was suspected to be the victim of coercive control.

Andrew Pimlott [2015]

Representing the Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall Police. The Deceased died from burn injuries after being tasered by a police officer.

Maher, Roberts and Dunsby [2015]

Representing the investigating police force at the “Brecon Beacons” inquest in relation to an issue of disclosure by the coroner to the Media.

Lloyd Butler [2014]

Representing the Chief Constable of West Midlands Police. This case concerned the death of a detainee who died in a cell in police custody.

Maria Stubbings [2014]

Counsel to the Inquest for HM Senior Coroner for Essex for the preparatory stages of the investigation into the death of a woman who was killed by her partner, Marc Chivers, who had previously been imprisoned for murder in Germany.

Maureen Leaver [2013]

Representing the Family of an elderly woman who died after being detained under the Mental Health Act and suffering hypothermia as a result of medication (in West Sussex Coroner's Court).

Rachel Slack, Auden Slack and Andrew Cairns [2013]

Representing the Chief Constable of Derbyshire in a case in which a mother and her young son were killed by her former partner. The case raised issues about the care given by mental health services and the protection provided by the police (in Derby Coroner's Court).

Jimmy Mubenga [2013]

Representing three Detention Custody Officers who had custody of the Deceased when he died as a result of their restraint on an aircraft during his deportation (in West London Coroner's Court).

Nunes and Markland [2011]

Counsel to the Inquest for HM Coroner for Hampshire. The two Deceased men were shot by the police whilst carrying out an armed robbery.

Ian Tomlinson [2011]

Counsel to the Inquest for Sir Peter Thornton QC (former Chief Coroner) sitting as ADC for the City of London. The Deceased was a passer-by who died during the G20 protests in London after having been pushed by a police officer.

Naomi Bryant [2011]

Counsel to the Inquest for HM Coroner for Hampshire. This case concerned a woman who was murdered by a life-sentenced prisoner who had been released on licence.

Colette Lynch [2009]

Counsel to the Inquest for Sir Christopher Pitchers sitting as ADC for Warwickshire. This case concerned a young woman who was killed by her mentally unwell partner and it raised issues about the protection given to her by the police, social services and mental health services.

Public and Administrative

Alison regularly advises and appears in the Administrative Court in relation to claims for judicial review or applications under section 13 of the Coroners Act 1988, usually acting on behalf of Coroners or Police Constabularies.

Notable Public and Administrative cases

Mueller v Area Coroner for Manchester West [2017] EWHC 3000 (Admin)

an application under s.13 of the Coroners Act 1988 in which the President of the QBD gave guidance on the conduct of “documentary” inquests.

R (on the application of P and others) v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2017] EWCA Civ 321

represented the Metropolitan Commissioner as part of linked appeals which considered the lawfulness of the revised statutory scheme for the disclosure of convictions and its compatibility with Article 8 ECHR.

R (SofS for Transport) v HM Senior Coroner for Norfolk [2016] EWHC 2279 (Admin)

the Lord Chief Justice ruled that coroners’ powers under schedule 5 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 did not enable them to order the Air Accidents Investigation Branch to disclose cockpit voice and flight data recordings. The Court also gave guidance concerning overlapping investigatory jurisdictions.

R (NE and NM) v Birmingham Magistrates’ Court and Chief Constable of West Midlands Police [2015] EWHC 688 (Admin)

the President of the QBD ruled upon the proper approach to be taken to an application by a serious sexual offender for release from the indefinite notification requirements in the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

HM Senior Coroner for Cumbria v Smith [2015] EWHC 2465 (Admin)

an application under s.13 of the Coroners Act 1988 for a fresh inquest into the death of Poppi Worthington, a 13 month old baby suspected to have suffered abuse.

Flower v HM Senior Coroner for Devon [2015] EWHC 3666 (Admin)

the Court clarified the law by ruling that a decision by a coroner not to resume an inquest after criminal proceedings does not make him functus officio.

R (Krol) v The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis [2014] EWHC 4552 (Admin)

the court ruled that the police’s refusal to expunge a caution for the offence of actual bodily harm by a mother in punishing her young daughter did not breach her Article 8 rights.

Brown v HM Coroner for Norfolk and the Chief Constable of Norfolk Constabulary [2014] EWHC 187 (Admin)

an application for a fresh inquest under s.13 of the Coroners Act 1988. The judgment provides guidance from the Chief Coroner concerning pre-inquest review hearings.

Wilkinson v HM Coroner for Manchester (South) [2012] EWHC 2755 (Admin)

the use of the “unlawful killing” conclusion in cases where the death has resulted from careless driving and concluded that driving offences causing death could not justify that verdict.

Police Law

Alison regularly represents Chief Constables and their officers in inquests, public inquiries, judicial review claims and civil actions. She also advises on many aspects of police powers including both policy and operational issues. Additionally, Alison acts for Appropriate Authorities and advises Panels in police misconduct proceedings.

A few examples of her work for Police Forces over recent years include :

Public Inquiries :

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse : In 2020 for South Wales Police and in 2018 for West Midlands Police.

Inquests :

Helen Loveday [2018] : Representing the Chief Constable of Norfolk in a case in which the Deceased was reported as distressed and missing, and was struck and killed by the vehicle of the police officers who were attending the call.

Kamal Nour [2016] : Representing the Chief Constable of Norfolk in a case in which the Deceased killed himself whilst “under siege” from the police.

Andrew Pimlott [2015] : Representing the Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall Police. The Deceased died from burn injuries after being tasered by a police officer.

Lloyd Butler [2014] : Representing the Chief Constable of West Midlands Police. This case concerned the death of a detainee who died in a cell in police custody.

Rachel Slack, Auden Slack and Andrew Cairns [2013] : Representing the Chief Constable of Derbyshire in a case in which a mother and her young son were killed by her former partner. The case raised issues about the care given by mental health services and the protection provided by the police (in Derby Coroner’s Court).

Judicial Review :

R (P and others) v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2017] EWCA Civ 321 : represented the Metropolitan Commissioner in the Court of Appeal as part of linked appeals which considered the lawfulness of the revised statutory scheme for the disclosure of convictions and its compatibility with Article 8 ECHR.

R (NE and NM) v Birmingham Magistrates’ Court and Chief Constable of West Midlands Police [2015] EWHC 688 (Admin) : the President of the QBD ruled upon the proper approach to be taken to an application by a serious sexual offender for release from the indefinite notification requirements in the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

R (Krol) v The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis [2014] EWHC 4552 (Admin) : the court ruled that the police’s refusal to expunge a caution for the offence of actual bodily harm by a mother in punishing her young daughter did not breach her Article 8 rights.

Personal Injury

Alison has acted for both claimants and defendants and has extensive experience of injuries sustained in custody, at work or in road traffic incidents. She has conducted many cases which are clinically complex, and are of high value, including serious head injuries. Alison is also regularly instructed in relation to Article 2 / dependency claims arising after inquest proceedings.

Education & Qualifications

- 1984 – Called to the Bar by Middle Temple
- 1984 – Inns of Court School of Law, Bar Vocational Course
- 1983 – University College, London, LLB

Appointments

- 2016 – HM Senior Coroner for the City of London
- 2009 – Assistant Coroner for Surrey
- 2007 – Assistant Coroner for Manchester (West)

Awards & Scholarships

