

## **House of Commons**

### **Written answer**

**14 March 2024**

### **Coroners: Standards**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[901972]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure the adequacy of coroners' inquests.

**Mike Freer:**

The coroner's statutory duty, through the investigation and inquest process, is to establish who has died, and when, where and how they died. Coroners are independent judicial office holders and the way in which they conduct their investigations and inquests is a matter for them. However, the Government and the Chief Coroner are clear that the bereaved should be placed at the heart of this process.

The office of the Chief Coroner was introduced in 2013 to provide judicial leadership, guidance and support to coroners and to promote consistency of standards and practice. In addition, the Chief Coroner is required to provide an annual report to the Lord Chancellor which, amongst other issues, assesses the consistency of standards between coroner areas.

The Government continues to identify and implement measures to promote consistency of standards in coroner services – for example, through the programme of coroner area mergers, and by means of a suite of provisions in the Judicial Review and Courts Act 2022 to streamline coronial processes.

We also accepted a number of recommendations made by the Justice Committee following its 2021 Inquiry into the Coroner Service, and undertook to give further consideration to others. The Committee's current follow up Inquiry will, amongst other issues, consider progress against those recommendations.