**WRITING A STATEMENT**

* The role of a witness in a Coroner’s inquest is to assist the Coroner in the conduct of the investigation. Remember this when compiling a statement.
* A thorough and well written witness statement means you will be better prepared to attend the inquest hearing or that you may not be summonsed.
* Keep it professional. Statements should be typed and on headed paper.
* A suggested template is included in Appendix1 although your trust may have a preferred structure.
* Make clear the capacity in which you are making the statement. This will usually be as a professional witness ie witness to fact (as opposed to an expert witness).
* Access to the medical records is essential and other documents may be helpful (incident report forms, theatre lists, ward diary, duty rotas, protocols etc).
* ***Be honest***, giving the impression that you are concealing facts or misleading the court can lead to serious consequences. Remember you have a duty of candour.
* Be clear what you cannot remember.
* Avoid hearsay or second hand reporting.
* Stick to the facts, do not speculate. Interpretation is the purpose of the inquest.
* Be concise and clear, avoiding jargon or abbreviations. Explain medical terminology including medication and what it is used for. Write as if for an intelligent lay person. This will be appreciated by the Coroner and the family.
* Try to deal with any errors or omissions – this is an opportunity to explain why something was not done.
* Look at the overall impact of your statement. Does it allow the reader to visualise how events occurred?
* A statement is disclosable in law. Do not write anything in a way that you would regret hearing if discussed in another venue later.
* Get your report right, don’t rush it or do it at the end of a busy shift.
* Seek advice if you have concerns.
* Read your statement through, make any changes you feel are necessary, and only sign it when you are completely happy with what it says and how it says it. This Iis ***your*** statement.
* Include a statement of truth, sign and date, and send to the Coroner with a covering letter. This should be with the knowledge and agreement of the trust, usually the medical director.
* Keep a copy.
* Remember the Coroner will ask for a statement if they want your help; it does not imply you have done something wrong.

**Appendix 1 – Statement template**

*(Pro-forma for Statement/Report – to be typed on headed paper)*

Ref: Date

 Report for: e.g. Statement for Her Majesty's Coroner in the Inquest

Touching the Death of [Joe Blogs]

Dear ,

**Patient’s Name: (DoB: )**

**Patient’s Address:**

1) Set out – Your full name, your work address, your current post, your post & grade at the time of the incident in question, and details of your qualifications.

2) Set out details of where you worked, either unit or team, and explain the nature of the ward/team and the patient group that you worked with. If it is a ward please set out

its size and the type of patients on the ward – including whether under Section or not

and whether any specialist services are provided.

3) If appropriate please set out details of your role on the ward/team, e.g. do you have primary nurse responsibility, are you a manager, do you participate in multi- disciplinary team planning and so on. If you were under supervision, you should say by whom.

4) Please set out details of your earliest contact with the patient. Ensure you refer to the medical records – if this is not possible you should state this. If you use an abbreviation, this should be explained fully and a translation provided. Set out dates and times in full using the 24hr clock, e.g. 1300hrs on 27.06.11 – not 1 on 27/6.

5) Then set out the story - in chronological order, and in first person (*I did this …*). Say what your involvement was – what you did, what you heard, what you saw (other witnesses can explain their own involvement), include details of your subsequent contact with the patient, your interaction with them, and/or relevant others. If you made a decision jointly, set this out e.g. “*…… and I agreed that I should do this……”.*

6) A statement should be factual, and you should avoid providing an opinion.

7) When referring to others use their name and job title. If protocols or standard procedures are relevant, you can refer to these in your statement – and attach a copy if you have one. Any attachments should be marked as an exhibit (e.g. with your initials and a number) and referred to in the statement.

8) As far as possible be clear when you have witnessed events, or if you have been given information, and set out the source of it.

9) If you refer to specific information in the records and/or a report of some kind then please identify this by date. Sometimes it is helpful to have a transcript of those notes incorporated into your statement. Sometimes a diagram/illustration will help you explain - these can also be incorporated into your statement.

*10)* Insert a ‘Statement of Truth’ – i.e. *This statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.*

YOUR SIGNATURE DATE