

recurrence of fatalities, but such reports are to be sent to the person or authority which may have power to take action. They are not routinely sent or copied to the Home Office.

*The nature and extent of the mechanisms (both formal and informal) that existed between 1984-1995, and thereafter, to ensure that the Department's work in standard-setting was publicised and implemented, or otherwise acted upon; and the operations of these mechanisms in practice.*

20. As explained at paragraph 15 above, the Home Office has no statutory responsibility for, and has not in practice set, specific standards of conduct for coroners. The Home Office has not therefore publicised any standards of conduct, nor sought to appraise individual coroners on the way in which they carry out their functions. Coroners themselves are to be urged to publicise an outline of what the public can expect in the form of a local 'charter' later this year.
21. In response to enquiries or complaints about coroners' conduct, it is Home Office practice to draw the matter to the attention of the coroner concerned and to seek his or her observations. This procedure aims to ensure that coroners are aware of public expectations of their conduct and of instances where their conduct may have fallen short. Serious cases of poor administration or unprofessional conduct would be considered for referral to the Lord Chancellor's Department.
22. In the interests of promoting an efficient and effective coroner service, the Home Office has, since 1993 sought information, in coroners' annual returns, regarding the length of time taken to complete certain key tasks: the issue of certificates where no inquest is required; the issue of disposal certificates; and the completion of inquests. These details, which do not identify particular cases, have been obtained on a confidential basis for internal use only, pending confirmation as to their relevance and accuracy. Where significant deviations from the average have been detected, the Home Office has investigated the position to ascertain whether the figures are accurate and whether there are known reasons for the apparent delays.

## 2. Coroners

*The professional standards or guidance that existed, from 1984-1995, and thereafter, to guide the conduct and practice of Coroners.*

23. There are no professional standards or guidelines for coroners, although there are a number of standard legal texts and commentaries, such as *Jervis on Coroners* (11<sup>th</sup> edition 1993).