

Our probate services and fees

The death of someone close is likely to be a difficult and distressing time and the practical and legal considerations may seem unfamiliar and daunting.

It will usually be necessary for the executors in the will to obtain a grant of probate to deal with the assets in the estate and they may need to submit a detailed inheritance tax account and arrange the payment of inheritance tax. If there is no will, the law of intestacy will govern who is entitled to deal with the estate and who inherits.

How we can help

In the Private Client team at HCR Law, we specialise in all aspects of estate administration and have a wealth of experience in dealing with a wide range of estates from smaller, straightforward estates to complex, high-value estates involving agricultural and business property, foreign assets, trusts, lifetime gifts and complex claims for inheritance tax reliefs. Our solicitors are either members of the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners (STEP) or are supervised by solicitors who are members of STEP, ensuring high standards of technical expertise. Where relevant, our Contentious Trusts and Probate team are able to advise on any potential areas of dispute.

To view those in the Private Client team on our website, please click [here](#).

Our fees

Our fees are calculated on the time we spend dealing with the administration of the estate, whether we are appointed as executors or instructed by executors. We do not charge a percentage of the value of the estate.

Our current hourly rates are set out below. They are reviewed regularly and are subject to VAT (at 20%). We aim to ensure estates are dealt with by those at the appropriate level.

Partners	£345 to £475
Legal Directors	£310 to £475
Senior Associates/Associates/Solicitors	£280 to £400
Trainee Solicitors/Paralegals	£180 to £220

The time spent, and therefore the overall fees, will depend on the terms of the will and the composition and complexity of the estate. We will give an estimate at an early stage, after consideration of the particular circumstances and will keep the estimate under review.

In some circumstances, we may agree a fixed fee for the work.

Example fees for a straightforward estate

On average, a straightforward estate is likely to take in the region of 15 to 25 hours to administer. This assumes we deal with the administration of the estate by ascertaining the values required, obtaining the grant of probate, collecting in the assets and distributing the estate.

As a guide, our fees for administering a straightforward estate are likely to be in the region of:

£4,000 to £8,000 plus VAT (VAT at 20% would be £800 to £1,600 on these figures, so £4,800 to £9,600 including VAT).

What is regarded as a straightforward estate will vary. This range of fees assumes:

- A professionally drawn will with executors willing to act
- Any legacies are of cash or personal effects only and are limited in number
- There are no more than three residuary beneficiaries and no trusts in the will
- No inheritance tax is payable and no inheritance tax account is required
- The assets are straightforward eg a property, up to five bank accounts and premium bonds
- All assets are in the UK
- There are no disputes

- No tax returns are required
- There is no claim by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in respect of overpaid benefits
- There is no claim against the estate for financial provision
- The executors provide paperwork in good order.

The range of fees shown is only an indication; the fee estimate will depend on the particular circumstances. If there is one beneficiary, two or three bank accounts and no property, our fees are likely to be towards the lower end of the range shown; if there are two or three beneficiaries, several legacies, several accounts and a property, our fees are likely to be at the higher end of the range shown. There may be other factors which increase the time spent and therefore the fees.

Additional fees

The range of fees shown does not include our fees for dealing with the sale of a property in the estate. A separate charge is made for this aspect.

How executors can help

Executors can help to reduce the time we spend on certain aspects by providing limited documentation in good order, dealing with practical matters such as bills and communicating well with other executors to avoid duplication of queries or requests.

Estates that are not straightforward

Our fees for dealing with a more complex estate are likely to exceed the upper end of the range shown and may be considerably higher to reflect the particular complexities. Some examples of more complex estates are given below:

- An intestate estate (where the person who died did not leave a will)
- The will includes trusts
- There are shares/other investments
- There is more than one property
- An inheritance tax account is required
- There are lifetime gifts to report to HMRC
- There are complex claims for inheritance tax reliefs
- Inheritance tax is payable
- The estate includes a business or foreign assets
- Tax returns are required
- The person who died was the beneficiary of a trust.

We are happy to discuss the estate with you and give an estimate of fees based on the specific circumstances.

Expenses that may be payable

In addition to our fees, expenses known as 'disbursements' are likely to be payable to third parties which may be subject to VAT at 20%. Usual disbursements in an estate are referred to below, although other disbursements may become payable:

Probate Court Fee	£300 (plus £1.50 for each copy grant)
Bankruptcy Searches	£6 per name searched against plus VAT
Trustee Act Notices	Usually £300 to £400 plus VAT

If valuations are required (eg of property or shares), valuation fees may be payable to the valuer and other professional fees may become payable (eg accountants' fees, estate agents' fees, genealogists' fees). VAT may be payable on these fees.

If inheritance tax (or other tax) is payable, it will be payable in addition to the fees, disbursements and expenses referred to above.

Key stages in an estate

The key stages common to most estates where no inheritance tax account is required are set out below:

- Ascertain the values of the assets and liabilities of the estate at the date of death
- Prepare the online application for probate (unless a paper application is required)
- Register the grant of probate where necessary to collect in the assets
- Pay liabilities and legacies
- Deal with the sale or transfer of a property and any shares
- Report to HMRC on the income tax and capital gains tax position
- Prepare estate accounts, obtain the executors' approval and distribute the estate.

In more complex estates, there will be other aspects such as arranging valuations of shares or business interests, completing the inheritance tax account and supplementary pages, claiming inheritance tax reliefs, paying the inheritance tax due, dealing with enquiries from HMRC, obtaining inheritance tax clearance, registering the estate with the Trust Registration Service (TRS) and submitting tax returns for the post-death period.

How long does the administration of an estate take?

A straightforward estate is likely to take eight to 18 months to administer. As a guide, it usually takes up to four months to obtain the grant of probate and a further four to eight months to finalise the administration of the estate.

A more complex estate can take considerably longer to administer, particularly where inheritance tax is payable and claims for agricultural property relief and business property relief have been made. It can take HMRC months to consider the detail and they may choose to raise enquiries on the valuations returned or the reliefs claimed.

We understand that a prolonged administration can be distressing. Our aim is to deal with the estate in a timely and efficient way and to conclude all aspects at the earliest opportunity. We will give an idea of timescale at the outset and as the matter progresses.

Limited service – obtaining the grant

As an alternative to dealing with the full administration of the estate, we can simply act for executors in obtaining the grant of probate (with the preliminary work undertaken by the executors or ourselves and the post-grant work dealt with by the executors).

As a guide, our fees for an online application for a grant of probate, where the executors provide us with the information required and no inheritance tax account is required, are likely to be in the region of:

£1,750 to £2,500 plus VAT at 20% (£2,100 to £3,000 including VAT).

Contacting us

If you would like to discuss our services or our fees, please contact one of the lawyers in our Private Client team who will be pleased to assist.

Our team

Name	Title	Office	Qualification	Year passed
Katie Maxwell-Stewart	Legal Director, Disputed Wills, Trusts & Estates	Birmingham	Solicitor	01/10/2008
Lisette Macdonald	Senior Associate	Birmingham	Solicitor	17/09/2012
Terry Cooper	Partner	Birmingham	Solicitor	01/11/1989
Joanna Baker	Partner, Disputed Wills, Trusts & Estates	Cambridge	CILEx	13/10/2010
Alexandra Francis	Associate (TEP)	Cambridge	Solicitor	01/03/2012
Bernadette O'Reilly	Partner (TEP)	Cambridge	Solicitor	16/09/1996
Chloe Grainger	Associate (TEP)	Cambridge	Solicitor	24/08/2020
Daniel Curtis	Partner (TEP) Joint Head of Private Client Team	Cambridge	Solicitor	01/10/1997
Elizabeth Davies	Partner (TEP)	Cambridge	Solicitor	15/10/1993
Elizabeth Herbert	Associate (TEP)	Cambridge	Solicitor	01/10/2015
Ella Blake	Solicitor, Disputed Wills, Trusts & Estates	Cambridge	Solicitor	07/03/2025
Jennifer Barker	Solicitor (TEP)	Cambridge	Solicitor	15/03/2019
Katherine Hague	Partner (TEP)	Cambridge	Solicitor	15/09/2015
Kelly Wardell	Senior Associate (TEP)	Cambridge	Solicitor	15/09/2005
Kerry Rowan	Associate (TEP)	Cambridge	Solicitor	01/11/2016
Lisa Millington	Partner (FALA)	Cambridge	Solicitor	15/05/2013
Lucy Playford	Solicitor	Cambridge	Solicitor	07/09/2023
Suzanne Whyman	Senior Associate (TEP)	Cambridge	Solicitor	01/10/2009
Tom Hale	Associate	Cambridge	Solicitor	06/09/2021
Alan Taylor	Tax and Trust Associate Executive	Cambridge		
Laura Wood	Tax and Trust Manager	Cambridge		
Lyndsey Frampton	Chartered Legal Executive	Cardiff	CILEx	19/01/2021
David King	Partner (TEP)	Cardiff	Solicitor	10+ years' experience in estate administration and estates comprising foreign, agricultural and business assets
Georgia O'Reilly	Associate	Cardiff	Solicitor	01/10/2019
Laura Ikin	Senior Associate	Cardiff	Solicitor	15/11/2012
Nia Griffiths	Partner	Cardiff	Solicitor	01/09/2016
Richard Adams	Partner, Disputed Wills, Trusts & Estates	Cardiff	Solicitor	03/11/2003
Sean Boucher	Partner	Cardiff	Solicitor	15/07/2015
Sarah Baguley	Legal Director (TEP)	Cardiff		15+ years' experience as a STEP practitioner
Alexandra Svennevik	Senior Associate (TEP)	Central England	Solicitor	15/03/2018
Bianca Rajasekarak	Solicitor	Central England	Solicitor	06/09/2024

Catherine Ball	Partner (TEP)	Central England	Solicitor	01/02/1999
Emma Rolfe	Associate (TEP)	Central England	Solicitor	02/03/2015
Gina Khera	Legal Director (TEP) Disputed Wills, Trusts & Estates	Central England	Solicitor	15/08/2006
Hauke Harrack	Associate (TEP)	Central England	Solicitor	17/09/2007
Jane Stebbings	Associate (TEP)	Central England	Solicitor	16/10/1989
Joanne Gilding	Solicitor	Central England	Solicitor	01/01/2022
Kerri Woodrow	Partner	Central England	Solicitor	17/09/2007
Tonina Ashby	Partner & Notary Public	Central England	Solicitor	01/11/2016
Alex Taylor	Partner, Joint Head of Private Client Team	Cheltenham	Solicitor	20+ years' experience in planning and estate administration involving agricultural property or business property, as well as cross-border estates
Hannah Clarke	Solicitor	Cheltenham	Solicitor	09/09/2024
Hannah Monks	Solicitor	Cheltenham	Solicitor	26/03/2025
Jamie Davies	Associate (TEP)	Cheltenham	Solicitor	11+ years' experience in estate administration
Lauren McGurk	Partner (TEP)	Cheltenham	Solicitor	6+ years' experience in estate administration
Niamh McAlonan	Senior Associate	Cheltenham	Solicitor	9+ years' experience in estate administration and estates comprising foreign, agricultural and business assets
Phillipa Bruce-Kerr	Partner	Cheltenham	Solicitor	38+ years' experience in estate administration, with business and agricultural property
Tom Murphy-Kirkhope	Partner	Cheltenham	Solicitor	7+ years' experience in estate administration
Emily Sadler	Legal Director	Hereford	Solicitor	02/04/2013
Lucy Willmetts-Price	Associate	Hereford	Solicitor	18/06/2021
Stephanie Waters	Associate (TEP)	Hereford	Solicitor	03/03/2022
Adam Matthews	Associate	London	Solicitor	15/03/2018
Charlene Rayner	Solicitor	London	Solicitor	16/05/2022
Colin Jaque	Partner	London	Solicitor	02/12/1963
Emma-Kate Robinson	Legal Director	London	Solicitor	01/02/2010
John Karim	Associate	London	Solicitor	12/05/2021
Suja Kotecha	Associate	London	Solicitor	01/06/2020

Emma McCarthy	Partner	Thames Valley	Solicitor	21+ years' experience in estate administration and estates comprising foreign, agricultural and business assets
Alyson McGowan	Legal Director, Disputed Wills, Trusts & Estates	Worcester	Solicitor	15/11/1989
Beth King-Smith	Partner, Head of Disputed Wills, Trusts & Estates	Worcester	Solicitor	15/09/2010
Claire Pottinger	Partner	Worcester	Solicitor	15/09/1999
Grace Fidschuster	Associate	Worcester	Solicitor	03/11/2021
Helen Barkworth	Associate (TEP)	Worcester	Solicitor	01/10/2018
Imogen D'Arcy	Associate	Worcester	Solicitor	16/12/2019
Leanne Harle	Associate, Disputed Wills, Trusts & Estates	Worcester	Solicitor	16/03/2020
Shirley Rabbetts	Partner (TEP)	Worcester	Solicitor	20+ years' experience in estate administration, taxable estates with agricultural and business property relief
Michelle Abbott	Senior Associate (TEP)	Worcester		
Harriet Black	Senior Associate (TEP)	Wye Valley	Solicitor	02/03/2020
Julia Stahl	Partner	Wye Valley	Solicitor	02/10/2006