

Probate costs and fees: what you'll pay and what to expect

Worrying about the cost of probate is one of the most common concerns people raise with us, and it's a sensible thing to ask about. Nobody wants a surprise bill at an already difficult time.

Probate costs are easier to understand once you know what they're made up of. This guide explains the main costs in plain English, so you know what to expect and what questions to ask.

The main costs at a glance

Most estates involve some or all of the following:

- **The court fee** for applying for the grant
- **Professional fees**, if you use a solicitor
- **Other costs along the way**, such as valuations, property expenses, notices to protect executors and, for some estates, Inheritance Tax

Not every estate will have all of these, and the total varies a great deal from one estate to the next.

The court fee

To get a Grant of Probate or Letters of Administration, an application has to be made to the Probate Registry, and a fee is payable. Since 13 July 2026, that fee is **£526** if the estate is worth more than £5,000. There's no fee for estates of £5,000 or less.

This is a flat fee. It's the same whether the estate is modest or substantial, and whether you apply yourself or use a solicitor. You'll also want a few official copies of the grant, because banks and other organisations often ask for one each. Copies are cheaper when you order them with the application, so it's worth working out how many you need at the start.

If you're on a low income or receive certain benefits, you may be able to get help with the application fee.

Solicitors' fees

Solicitors charge for probate in different ways. Some charge a fixed fee, some charge by the hour, and some charge a percentage of the estate. Whichever approach a firm uses, you should be told **clearly and in writing**, before you commit, what the service

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includes, what it will cost and what isn't covered. If a firm can't give you a clear answer, that's a warning sign.

How our fees work at MHHP Law. We base our fixed fee on the time we expect your estate to take, at an hourly rate of £300 plus VAT, with a minimum fee of £1,500 plus VAT. Once we understand your situation, we'll give you a written fixed fee quote, so you know the figure before we start. In some estates we also include a modest charge reflecting the value of the estate, usually around 0.1%.

For a straightforward estate, our fee is likely to be around **£2,500 plus VAT**. By straightforward, we mean:

- there is a valid will,
- there is no more than one property,
- there are no more than six bank or building society accounts,
- no shares are held,
- there are between one and four beneficiaries,
- there are no disputes,
- there is no Inheritance Tax to pay, and
- the estate is worth no more than £500,000.

Over the last four years, our average probate fee has been around £2,500 plus VAT, and our highest was £6,000 plus VAT.

Our fee is **paid from the estate, not upfront**, so you don't need to find the money yourself at the start. Once you have a written quote, it won't change unless the information we were given turns out to be wrong, or circumstances change unexpectedly.

Our quote covers the whole process, from assessing the will and gathering valuations, through the Inheritance Tax forms, the application for the grant and paying any liabilities, to preparing the estate accounts and distributing the estate. The fixed probate fee does not cover conveyancing fees. If you wish us to sell a property which forms part of the estate we will give you a separate quote for that work.

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What affects the cost?

Two estates of the same value can cost very different amounts to deal with. The main factors are:

- **The number and type of assets.** Many accounts, investments, pensions or business interests take longer to gather in. Shareholdings, for example, are likely to add to the cost.
- **Inheritance Tax.** Where tax is payable, or a full account has to be submitted to HMRC, the work increases.
- **The beneficiaries.** Many beneficiaries, people who are hard to trace, or young beneficiaries add complexity.
- **Overseas assets.** These usually involve extra steps and sometimes extra advice abroad.
- **Disputes.** A disagreement between beneficiaries, or a claim against the estate, is the biggest single reason for costs to rise.
- **Whether there's a will.** An estate with no will, or with a poorly drafted one, often needs more work and therefore, more cost.

The costs that catch people out

Beyond the court fee and our own fee, there are costs paid to third parties, known as **disbursements**. We pay these on your behalf and itemise them in your quote, which keeps things simpler for you. They include:

- **The court fee** for the application, as above.
- **The cost of swearing the oath**, which each executor has to do.
- **Searches**, such as bankruptcy searches on beneficiaries.
- **Land Registry checks** to confirm who owns any property.
- **A notice in the London Gazette and a local newspaper.** This is placed to protect you as executor against unexpected claims from creditors or beneficiaries you don't know about. It typically costs between £300 and £500.

You may also come across other costs, depending on the estate:

- **Valuations** for property, antiques, jewellery or business interests.

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- **Costs of looking after property**, such as insurance for an empty home, utilities, security and maintenance, until it's sold or transferred.
- **Inheritance Tax**, which may have to be paid before the estate can be released. Many estates don't owe any, but it's worth checking.
- **Funeral costs**, which are usually paid from the estate.

Our fees are subject to VAT at 20%, and we'll show this clearly in your quote.

Who pays?

In most cases, the costs of dealing with an estate, including the court fee and our fee, are **paid from the estate**, before anything is distributed to the beneficiaries. Executors don't normally have to fund it personally. Sometimes, though, money is needed before the estate can be accessed, for example to pay Inheritance Tax so that the grant can be issued. If that's a worry, tell us early, as there are often practical ways to deal with it.

If you're a beneficiary, it's worth remembering that the costs reduce what's left to share.

Is it cheaper to do it myself?

Sometimes it is, particularly for a small, simple estate. But saving on fees can turn out to be a false economy if mistakes are made. Errors with valuations, tax or the timing of distributions can cost far more to fix than the fees would have been, and executors can be held personally liable. You should also count the value of your own time, which can be significant, and the stress of doing it while you're grieving.

What about banks?

Many banks offer estate services too, but these are typically more expensive than using a solicitor or a specialist firm. It's worth comparing quotes before you decide.

How to keep costs under control

- **Ask for a written quote** before you start, and check what it includes and what it doesn't.
- **Get clear, early advice.** Sorting out what's needed at the beginning is cheaper than putting things right later.
- **Be organised.** Gathering statements, policy details and paperwork yourself, where you can, saves time.
- **Order the right number of copies** of the grant when you apply.

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- **Tell us about any family disagreement early.** Resolving it quickly keeps costs down.
- **Ask us to review costs as things go on,** and to tell you if the estimate is likely to change.

Our commitment to you

At MHHP Law, we think you should know what you'll be paying before you start. You'll have a written quote setting out what's included and what isn't, and we'll tell you promptly if anything is likely to change it. For the full detail of our fees and the costs we pay on your behalf, see our [fixed fee probate page](#).

Talk to us

If you'd like to know what dealing with an estate is likely to cost, we're happy to talk it through with no obligation. Call Ruth Hayward on 020 3667 4784 or email at ruth.hayward@mhhplaw.com, and we'll help you take the first step.

This article is a general guide for England and Wales and does not constitute legal advice. Fees and rules change from time to time, and every estate is different, so please take advice on your own circumstances.

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