

Executors Advice Sheet

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Introduction

PLEASE NOTE THIS INFORMATION IS CORRECT AS OF 2024

This advice sheet has been created to try and make things a little easier for you while you are navigating the administration of an estate as well as grieving for your loved one. We hope that it answers any questions you may have and helps to highlight the main tasks that you will need to complete

Be aware that there may be other tasks to complete if it is a complicated estate, in which case we recommend you seek legal advice. You can seek legal advice at any time for any type of legacy if you are not sure about something, to avoid getting penalties.

If you still have questions please contact our Legacy team on 0203 752 5655 or email giftsinwills@cuf.org.uk and we will do our best to help you. **Please note that we are unable to give legal advice.**

The tasks listed here are not necessarily written in the order you need to complete them but we have tried to put them in a logical order.

What is an executor?

Hopefully you were notified when the deceased wrote their Will that you have been named as an executor so this should not be a shock to you.

As an executor you are legally responsible for the assets of the deceased – their money, house, and other belongings. This responsibility starts from date of death of the deceased and ends when everything has been passed to beneficiaries mentioned in the Will. This is known as the administrative period.

We understand that being an executor can be a challenging job and you will not necessarily know how or what you need to do.

Opting out of being an executor

If you are named in the Will as an executor but change your mind after the death of the deceased you will have to complete a Deed of Renunciation **BEFORE** the administration begins to exclude yourself from the administration of the estate. There is a fee for this and more information can be found on the government's website - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/form-pa15-give-up-probate-executor-rights>

Once you have started to deal with an estate you will not be able to step down unless you have a good reason eg you have ill health or there is a family emergency.

Contact the other executors

In most cases you will not be the only executor named in a Will so you should not be solely responsible for all the tasks to be completed in the administration of the estate (unless they opt out).

It is a good idea to contact any other executors as soon as possible so that you can start deciding between yourselves what tasks you are each going to complete and the best way to carry out your duties.

Registering the death

Registering the death is usually done by a relative of the deceased but if there are no relatives to do this you may need to register the death yourself. A death needs to be registered within five days – this includes weekends and bank holidays. You can register a death online here:

<https://www.gov.uk/register-a-death>. You may also need contact their GP and notify them of the death.

To register the death you will need to contact a register office (details can be found on the website above once you have answered some simple questions). You can use any register but it is usually quicker to use one in the area the deceased died in.

Before registering the death you will need to try and obtain the following documents of the deceased as the register office may want to see them (they will advise you of exactly what documentation they will need when you first contact them):

- Birth certificate
- Council Tax bill
- Driving licence
- Marriage or civil partnership certificate
- NHS medical card
- Passport
- Proof of address (such as a utility bill)

You will also need to give the registrar the following information:

- The deceased's full name at the time of death
- Any names they previously used, eg their maiden name
- The deceased's date and place of birth
- Their last address
- Their occupation
- The full name, date of birth and occupation of any surviving or late spouse or civil partner
- Whether they were getting a State Pension or any other benefits

Obtaining a death certificate

You will be able to get this once you have registered the death.

You need to obtain a death certificate as you will need this when you are closing any of the deceased's accounts. It is strongly advisable to pay for several copies at this stage as it can be cheaper than paying to get additional copies later

NOTE - some organisations (banks and insurance companies for example) will not accept a standard photocopy.

It is worth noting that you may need one for each company that holds assets of the deceased – this can include banks, insurance companies, mortgage companies etc. Information on what you need to do can be found on the government's website - <https://www.gov.uk/order-copy-birth-death-marriage-certificate>

Reporting the Death

You will need to tell the issuers of the deceased's credit cards, passport, driving license, and TV license that they have died – they will advise you of any next steps you will need to complete.

You can do this using the Death Notification Service by going to their website <https://www.deathnotificationservice.co.uk/portal.ofml>. It may not include all financial organisations though so you should double check that any organisations associated with the deceased are listed on the website in case you need to contact anyone directly.

There is also a service called 'Tell Us Once' which has been created allowing you to report a death to most government organisations in one place. You will be given a reference number to use the service by the registrar once you have registered the death. More information about it can be found on the governments website - <https://www.gov.uk/after-a-death/organisations-you-need-to-contact-and-tell-us-once>

Finding the most recent Will of the deceased

Most of the time a person will store their Will in their home or with a solicitors so this is a good starting place when it comes to finding it. You will need to make sure it is the most up to date version (see below) and then make copies for yourself and any other executors named. The original should then be stored again in a safe space and should not be amended or tampered with in any way (which can include adding staples).

You can search for the deceased's Will using the National Will Register. This service can also help you make sure you have the most up to date version of the Will. You will need proof of your Identity and a Death Certificate to access the Will.

Tel: 0330 100 3660.

www.nationalwillregister.co.uk/search-for-a-will/

Securing the property and belongings of the deceased

You may need to secure the deceased's property and belongings if they lived alone, to ensure that they are safe during the administration period. You should inform any insurance company that the property is unoccupied in case any existing policies do not cover a property if it is empty.

You may also need to complete regular checks of the property to make sure it does not fall into disrepair which could affect any future house sales and its value.

Stopping post

You will need to stop any postal deliveries in the name of the deceased. The easiest way to do this is to register their name and address with the bereavement register which is a free service. This will stop any unwanted marketing post going to their address and take them off any mailing lists.

www.thebereavementregister.org.uk/

You can also choose to have a Royal Mail redirection started to your address which will help you know who to contact (you will see who writes to them). More information about how to do this can be found on Royal Mails website <https://www.royalmail.com/help/bereavement>

Making the Funeral arrangements

You and any other executors will need to arrange the funeral and notify any relatives and friends of the death. This could be in person or by putting an announcement in the local paper with the details of the funeral so people who knew the deceased can attend if they are able and wish to do so.

The deceased may have included funeral wishes and instructions in their Will which, while you are not legally obligated to follow these, you are required to follow these where possible. Remember that they may have also told other friends and family what they want so don't be afraid to reach out and delegate tasks, you don't have to do it all yourself.

They may have also set up a pre-paid funeral plan and details of this should hopefully be in the same place as the Will. You will need to contact the provider as soon as possible. Be aware that if you receive any invoices from the funeral directors you can take these to the deceased's bank together with the Will, your ID and a death certificate and have a cheque issued made payable to them or they can pay them directly for you if bank details were included.

Valuing the estate and gathering financial information

The executors of an estate are responsible for gathering the details and values of the deceased's estate. The easiest way to do this is to make a list of everything they owned at the time of their death (assets) as well as any debts (liabilities) they had. This can be referred to as a schedule of assets and liabilities. You will need this information to work out if Inheritance tax is owed and before you apply for probate so it needs to be very accurate.

If you are not sure about any of this it is advisable to get professional help as executors can be held personally liable if there are any mistakes.

Assets can include properties, cars, jewellery and other possessions, savings, shares and bank accounts as well as life insurance to name a few. It is also joint assets so be sure to include those values as well. Anything with a value of over £500 should be professionally valued (as recommended by HMRC). Liabilities can include any credit cards, loans, mortgage and other bills.

You do not need to value the estate straight away but it is advisable to do it as soon as possible in case any Inheritance Tax (IHT) is owed so that you don't risk any fines for missing any deadlines.

You need to find any financial information and freeze any accounts in the deceased's name (you may need to send them a copy of the death certificate). You should also ask for written confirmation of

the value of each account at the time of death. You should complete a search for any bank and savings accounts that may be considered 'lost' if the deceased didn't respond to any mail for them. You can do this using the my lost account website (details below) – don't do this if you know the details of the account.

Make a note of each account that holds money and ask them if they will need a copy of the Grant of Probate when it is issued before they can release funds to you for distribution.

Make sure that you check if there are any Direct Debits or Standing Orders going out of their bank accounts, as you will need to stop these being paid. If they were coming out of a joint account you will need to get the bank to update their records. If the partner who is still alive wants these Direct Debits or Standing Orders to continue they will need to contact the payee and ask them to update their records as well as advise them of the death.

To get a value for any property or land in the deceased's name it is advisable to get a professional valuation. You will also need to work out the value of any lifetime gifts that they may have given in the seven years before their death – the governments website includes a list on what you will need to know before submitting the value for inheritance tax.

The total value of assets will give you the gross estate value. You will need to subtract the value of all debts that they had from the gross value to give you the net value. You will then need to report this value to HMRC. Visit the government website for more information on how to do this:

<https://www.gov.uk/valuing-estate-of-someone-who-died>. There is also a YouTube video that you can watch (link can be found here [Inheritance Tax \(IHT\) Help video](#)).

Checking for and paying Inheritance tax (IHT)

As of 2024 Inheritance tax rate is 40% (36% if 10% or more of the Net value is left to charity in the Will). IHT is owed if the estate is worth more than a £325,000 threshold (this figure is correct as of 2024) at the time of death. It is a tax that is only paid on anything over this value.

Eg – an estate is worth £500,000. If you minus the £325,000 value that is under the threshold then IHT will only be charged against the £175,000 (the difference).

There is no IHT to pay if the estate is left to a spouse, civil partner or a charity.

If there is any inheritance tax owed on the estate you must start paying this by the end of the sixth month after death. You must also do this before you apply for probate.

Please see the government website for an online calculator to work out whether IT is owed:

<https://www.tax.service.gov.uk/guidance/check-inheritance-tax-due/>

Applying for Probate

A Grant of Probate gives you and any other executors a legal right to deal with the estate of the deceased and distribute any gifts to beneficiaries. Only one executor needs to apply for the grant so decide between yourselves who is going to act as lead. You can find more information about how to apply for probate on the government website. Please note that a grant of probate will not be issued until inheritance tax has been paid.

Depending on the value of the estate there may be a fee to pay when you apply for probate. In 2024 if the value of the estate is over £5,000 the fee for application is £300. There is no fee if the value is under £5,000. You can ask when the process starts for extra copies of the probate certificate when it is issued for a cost of £1.50 each. As mentioned above you may need one for each asset holder so that they know they can release funds to you which is why it is good to check so you know how many copies to order.

You can apply for a grant either in writing or online. If applying online you will still need to send the original Will and any other supporting documents by mail (it is strongly advised that this is using a signed-for or tracked service). Please see <https://www.gov.uk/applying-for-probate?step-by-step-nav=4f1fe77d-f43b-4581-baf9-e2600e2a2b7a> for more information.

Paying off any Debts and taxes

Now that you have been granted Probate and have permission to deal with the estate you will need to pay off all debts (this is only if the estate has the money available) before distributing any gifts to beneficiaries. Please be aware that it is against the law for you to share out the estate without probate being granted. These debts could be credit cards, loans, mortgage, energy or electric bills, council tax etc. but NOT a student loan. It also includes paying unpaid taxes as well as claiming a tax refund if it has been overpaid. If you have used the Tell Us Once service HMRC will tell you if there is anything to pay or if there is a refund owed.

If there is not enough money in the estate you will need to prioritise the order the debts are paid, with Mortgage being first. Family members are not liable for any debts it is only the estate, unless the debts are in a joint name (then it is the responsibility of the surviving person) or you haven't made enough effort to contact creditors. If you are not sure about anything it is advisable to contact a solicitor or citizens advice for more information.

To make sure that you are paying off all debts in the deceased's name it is advisable to place a notice in The Gazette (website details listed below) as well as the local newspaper for the area the deceased person lived in. This allows any creditors to claim anything they are entitled to within 2 months. By doing this you can show that you have put in enough effort to locate any creditors before paying beneficiaries and protects you (the executor) from being personally responsible for any outstanding debts if creditors come forward after the estate has been distributed.

Claiming on any insurance plans

During the administration of the estate, you may find details of a life insurance plan that the deceased had taken out. Now is the time to contact the provider alerting them of the death and start the claim process.

Make sure you have the policy number (if you can find it) as well as any other information you have found to hand when you call them to help speed up the process. They should then tell you what the next stages are and how long the process should take. You will need a copy of the death certificate to validate the claim so make sure you have a copy to be able to send it with any other paperwork you have to fill in.

A life insurance policy will form part of the estate unless it is written 'in trust'. If it is in trust it can be passed directly to the beneficiaries and will not be taken into account for IHT.

If you are not sure if the deceased had a life insurance policy because information wasn't included in the Will it is still worth checking as they can sometimes be worth a lot of money. Insurers don't always contact the beneficiaries themselves meaning they can go unclaimed.

You can find out if there was a policy by first checking their bank statements and looking for any regular monthly or annual payments – these could help you identify who the insurer is. You can also contact the employer of the deceased and see if they had a work death in service policy. Another way of finding out is by contacting the company directly – a full list of insurers can be found on the Association of British Insurers website.

Selling Assets

Before you can distribute the estate you will need to sell any assets that need to be sold so that you have the money to distribute as well as pay any outstanding additional CGT or Income tax .

You will need to sell any stocks and shares as well as property and other belongings not being distributed. Be aware that if any stocks or investments have gone up in value since the deceased died or since IHT was worked out you may need to pay capital gains tax (CGT). CGT doesn't have to be paid if the assets are being transferred directly to a beneficiary eg property. You can find more information on the government website listed below. If you do owe CGT then you have to report it within 60 days to HMRC. You may also need to pay income tax on any income received from an asset after death – this can include rental income or interest/dividend payments on savings, shares etc.

You may need to inform HMRC about any income gathered from the estate for the administration period (day of death until the day everything has been passed to beneficiaries. As of April 2024 if the income gained on the estate is less than £500 you do not need to report it to HMRC. According to their website The £500 tax-free amount applies:

- for every tax year of the administration period, but you cannot carry over unused amounts from one year to the next
- to all types of income, except ISAs, which continue to be exempt from Income Tax or Capital Gains until the estate is closed or up to 3 years after the person's death

You can find more information about a complex estate or anything over £500 here:

<https://www.gov.uk/probate-estate/reporting-the-estate>

Distributing the estate

Once Inheritance tax and any outstanding debts have been paid in full you now need to distribute the estate to beneficiaries as per the instructions in the Will. Remember if you don't pay off tax bills or any debts you (the executor) may be liable to pay them yourself if you have distributed the estate and don't have any money left.



This will involve making sure that any specific items, e.g. jewellery get given to the bequeathed, as well as any monetary gifts to family, individuals and charities. You should ask for each person/charity to sign a receipt so that you have proof that it has been distributed correctly.

Once everything has been distributed and there is nothing left on the estate your job as an executor is complete.

Useful links

Some of these organisations are mentioned in sections above but are included here for ease.

UK Government:

You can find a variety of information on this website including reporting a death, probate, Inheritance Tax and dealing with an estate

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/births-deaths-marriages/death>

Bereavement Register:

A free service to stop any unsolicited mail being sent to the deceased

www.thebereavementregister.org.uk/

Death Notification Service

Much like the Bereavement Register this is a free service that allows you to register the details of the deceased and notify financial organisations at the same time (banks, insurance companies etc)

<https://www.deathnotificationservice.co.uk/portal.ofml>

Royal Mail Redirection

<https://www.royalmail.com/personal/receiving-mail/redirection>

Citizens Advice

You can get advice on handling a Will and a deceased's estate

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/family/death-and-wills/dealing-with-the-financial-affairs-of-someone-who-has-died/>

Funeral Guide

For help and advice about how to find a funeral director, costs, and how to arrange a funeral

<https://www.funeralguide.co.uk/>

The National Bereavement Service

This is a service recommended on the Bereavement Register website. You may also be able to find other services local to you.

The National Bereavement Service can provide you with practical and emotional bereavement support for free.

Phone: 0800 0246 121



Web: www.thenbs.org

Email: info@thnbs.org

National Will Register

For help locating a Deceased persons Will and/or making sure you have the most up to date version

<https://www.nationalwillregister.co.uk/search-for-a-will/>

Registry Office search

For help finding the registry office closest to the deceased

<https://www.registerofficenearme.com/>

Tell Us Once

<https://www.gov.uk/after-a-death/organisations-you-need-to-contact-and-tell-us-once>

Law Society for England and Wales

Use this service to help you find a solicitor if you need to

Tel: 020 7242 1222.

www.lawsociety.org.uk

Inheritance Tax (IHT) Help video

This is a YouTube video created by HMRC with helpful tips on how to value an estate and when to pay IHT

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ev8gKkVb5wI>

IHT Queries

If you need to get the paperwork needed to pay IHT you can download one from the website or call them for any help and information

Tel: 0300 123 1072

Monday to Friday: 9am to 5pm

Closed on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs/contact/probate-and-inheritance-tax-enquiries>

You can also find all forms for Inheritance Tax here:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/inheritance-tax-forms

You can also write to them

Inheritance Tax
HM Revenue and Customs
BX9 1HT
United Kingdom



Capital Gains Tax

For more information about what this needs to be paid on and if you owe anything

<https://www.gov.uk/capital-gains-tax>

The Gazette

This is a service where you can place a notice alerting creditors of the death so that they can claim debts owed to them.

<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/wills-and-probate/place-a-deceased-estates-notice>

My lost account

This is a free service to track down any bank, savins or building society accounts

<https://www.mylostaccount.org.uk/>

Pension tracking service

This is a service to track down a lost pension and get contact details for the company that holds it. It will not tell you if you have a policy or its value - you need the name of an employer or a pension provider to use this service.

Tel: 0800 731 0193

<https://www.gov.uk/find-pension-contact-details>

Association of British Insurers

<https://www.abi.org.uk/about-the-abi/abi-members/>