



# Easterbrook Eaton Limited

Chartered Accountants  
Business and Personal Tax Services  
Probate and Estate Administration

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## PROBATE SERVICES

At Easterbrook Eaton Ltd, in addition to accountancy and tax services we specialise in non-contentious probate and estate administration. We are authorised and regulated by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), one of the approved legal services regulators in England and Wales.

### Our services

Our probate services include:

- applying for a Grant of Probate or Letters of Administration;
- identifying and valuing estate assets and liabilities;
- settling debts and paying any Inheritance Tax due;
- distributing assets to beneficiaries; and
- preparing estate accounts.

We offer these services to executors and administrators of estates across England and Wales. We also offer executorship services. We are happy to tailor our involvement in the processes of the above to suit your requirements.

### Key stages in probate

While each estate is different, the typical stages of a probate matter include the following.

1. **Initial consultation** – to gather details and confirm instructions.
2. **Information gathering** – identifying estate assets, debts, and beneficiaries.
3. **Inheritance tax forms (*not always required*)** – submitting relevant inheritance tax forms to HMRC if the estate is liable
4. **Probate application** – submitting the application to the Probate Registry.
5. **Estate administration** – collecting in assets, settling liabilities, paying tax.
6. **Finalisation** – distributing the estate and preparing final accounts.

We will explain each stage to you in more detail and keep you updated throughout the process.

## **Timescales for probate**

The probate process can vary considerably in length, depending on the complexity of the estate. Typical timescales – to the point of applying for probate - are set out below.

- Simple estates: 4 to 6 months (typically those estates where there are few assets, or where they pass entirely to a surviving spouse)
- More complex estates: 6 to 12 months (where there are more assets, or more beneficiaries)

For the administration of the estate, we would typically expect the additional time to finalise matters to be as follows:

- Simple estates – 3 to 6 months
- More complex estate: 6 to 18 months (where there is administration tax returns, properties to be sold, complex arrangements in the will, many beneficiaries etc).

Factors that may affect these timescales include:

- whether Inheritance Tax is payable;
- delays in receiving information from financial institutions;
- disputes between beneficiaries or third parties;
- share certificates being lost;
- HMRC enquiries into the estate or District Valuer review of property valuations; and/or
- difficulties selling a property or dealing with overseas assets.

We will provide a clearer timescale once we understand your specific circumstances.

## **What will affect the cost of our work?**

We charge on an hourly basis, typically £230+VAT for our probate work.

No estate is exactly the same and our fees will reflect the work required under the circumstances arising and the requirements you have for our services. The main factors on our pricing, as expected, will be the engagement we are carrying out, as in how many of the key stages mentioned earlier we will be carrying out (such as writing to financial institutions, preparing final estate accounts etc) and equally, the nature of the estate. For example if the estate is large and requires inheritance tax forms and calculations, if the estate contains properties to be sold, if all assets are known, and if documentation for items such as share certificates are to hand.

## **What are our typical fees?**

Generally speaking, at the lowest end of our fees would be where you are requiring our services to apply for the Grant of Probate only, and you are providing a summary of assets and liabilities with accompanying paperwork to enable this, but that you are also carrying out all other estate work yourself including the administration period taxation matters and estate accounts, in which case our fees would be £1,000 plus VAT, plus the cost of the probate application itself as a disbursement.

Where inheritance tax is payable, or where a full inheritance tax form IHT400 is required, the estate will tend to be more complex, and the time we charge will increase in these circumstances and range from £2,000+ VAT upwards. If the estate is complex by nature of a size or type of assets, or if there are assets requiring additional forms to claim relief such as agricultural property relief, or business property relief, you can expect our fees to be higher, and start in the region of £4,000-£7,000 plus vat to apply for the grant and complete the inheritance tax forms.

Once probate has been applied for and granted, the administration work on the estate will be required. If we are to assist in this area, our fee will depend upon the number of closure forms, the nature of the assets and if we are involved in assisting in the selling of an asset, such as property, which typically takes longer and takes more of our time. If the executors are managing the disposals and collection of assets, it stands that our time will be lower, and the fees reflective of this. Costs such as conveyancing and fees related to share disposals and brokers are separate costs of the estate and outside of our remit. If required, we can provide contact details for local solicitors who can assist in the conveyancing of property from the estate. Our work on the administration period will be at our hourly rate which is currently £230+ vat per hour. We will provide an estimate of the cost for the work during our initial engagement when we have experience of the estate and are in a position to better understand the nature of the estate.

### **Additional Probate costs**

The current probate application fee is £300. Additional copies are £16 each. We would usually recommend a minimum of four copies meaning an additional fee on top of our charges of £364 on a typical estate. Larger estate would usually require more copies as there are more assets to call in.

It is best practice to put a notification in the London Gazette and local paper. This indemnifies the executors if they make a distribution from the estate after the notice period. It is a fixed notice period of two months and one day for claimants to make a claim against the estate. The current fee varies, depending on the local paper, but the fee is typically around £400-450.

Conveyancing costs vary and we would advise executors to contact a trusted solicitor for a quote. We do not pay or receive any referral fees. If this ever applies in your matter, we will explain this in writing and obtain your consent.

If the deceased required a tax return, we will quote separately for that work, as you will need to ascertain the tax position of the deceased to the date of death. The fee for this will again depend on the complexity, such as the nature of the return, if accounts are required to be prepared etc. to accompany this.

Whilst not a cost of probate, inheritance tax is a cost of the estate and will be payable in circumstances depending on valuations. The current rate of inheritance tax can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/inheritance-tax>.

### **Why choose a regulated provider?**

Not all firms that carry out estate administration are regulated. Our regulation means we follow strict rules designed to protect you and to ensure you receive a high-quality, professional service. This means that we offer the following reassurances.

- We are monitored by ICAEW to ensure we meet professional and ethical standards.
- We comply with ICAEW's Legal Services Regulations and Code of Ethics.
- We must meet stringent accounting rules to keep client funds secure.
- We maintain professional indemnity insurance (PII) offering protection for our clients in the unlikely event of a professional error.
- You can contact the Legal Ombudsman if something goes wrong and you're not satisfied with how we handle your complaint.

- You may be able to claim through the [ICAEW Probate Compensation Scheme](#). Details and eligibility are available on ICAEW's website.

Our ICAEW probate registration number is: C001002600. You can verify our registration on the [ICAEW probate register](#)

## **Who will be working with you?**

We believe in transparency about who is delivering your service. On our [Meet the Team](#) page <https://www.easterbrooks.co.uk/about-us/meet-the-team> , you can find:

- staff qualifications and experience;
- information about which team members carry out which types of work; and
- their charging rates, where relevant.

In some cases, junior members of staff may assist with parts of the work to ensure efficiency. All work is carefully supervised by a qualified and experienced senior professional to maintain quality and consistency of service.

## **Questions?**

If you are thinking of using Easterbrook Eaton for any estate or probate related engagement, we are happy to discuss any of the above in detail. Please contact the office to make a free, no obligation initial meeting.