

Make sure you keep copies of the forms and anything else you have had to send with the forms. Before being granted probate, you'll need to sign a declaration of truth - the probate registry will tell you how they want you to do this. You won't need to go anywhere to sign in person.

You'll need to send some documents with the forms, including:

- the original will (if there is one) and three copies
- the death certificate
- the inheritance tax forms
- the probate fee

You then need to send the forms and documents to your local Probate Registry Office. This information will be in the pack provided.

The probate fee

The fee for applying for probate or letters of administration depends on the value of the estate. You won't pay a fee if the value of the estate is less than £5,000. If the estate is valued at £5,000 or more the fee is £215. This is the same for both post and online applications.

If you're on a low income or having financial problems you can apply to pay a reduced fee or no fee at all. You can apply online or download a form to print off at www.gov.uk.

Inheritance tax:

Inheritance tax may have to be paid if the estate is valued at more than £325,000. There are some exceptions to this rule, for example, if the husband, wife or civil partner inherits the estate. If inheritance tax has to be paid, some of the tax must be paid before probate or letters of administration is granted. Once probate or letters of administration have been granted, the final tax bill will be sorted out.

If there is a valid will the estate of the deceased will be distributed according to their wishes. If there is no valid will, spouses or civil partners can inherit from the estate under the rules of intestacy only if they are actually married or in a civil partnership at the time of death. Also, if you are divorced or if your civil partnership has been legally ended, you can't inherit under the rules of intestacy, however, partners who separated informally can still inherit under the rules of intestacy. Cohabiting partners (sometimes wrongly called 'common-law' partners) who were neither married nor in a civil partnership cannot inherit under the rules of intestacy.

If there are surviving children, grandchildren or great grandchildren of the person who died and the estate is valued at more than £250,000, the partner will inherit:

- all the personal property and belongings of the person who has died, and
- the first £250,000 of the estate, and half of the remaining estate.

If there are no surviving children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren, the partner will inherit:

- all the personal property and belongings of the person who has died and
- the whole of the estate with interest from the date of death.

Any remaining estate or assets will be distributed among the surviving members of the immediate family in line with the rules of intestacy

Debts:

The person who has died may have left debts, for example, an overdraft on their account or a credit agreement that has not been paid off.