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Executor's First Hour Pack

A structural orientation for the executor of a recently deceased relative

E-01 · ESTATE

"The first hour should not begin with a hunt."

PREPARED FOR

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Executor of the estate of David James Pemberton (died 12 June 2026) · Hertford

What is true now 1

Sarah — you have been named as executor of David's estate. This document is the institutional orientation for what that means and what comes next.

An executor is the person with legal authority to administer the estate — collect the assets, pay the debts, file the tax, and distribute what remains according to the will. The role is finite and has a defined sequence. Most executor work in a non-complex estate takes between **four and nine months**. This document orients you for the first hour and the first three months.

Before you read further.

You do not need to do anything right now. The first hour referenced in this document is the first hour you sit down to begin — it can be tomorrow, next week, or after the funeral. Nothing in the executor process is time-critical in the first **48 hours**.

CONTENTS

The first hour

2

When you sit down to begin, four things make the next several weeks easier. None of them require contacting any institution.

A

Find David's will

Most likely locations: David's home filing cabinet, their solicitor's office, the bank deposit box, or a personal safe. If you cannot find it, contact David's solicitor — if known — or search the National Will Register at nationalwillregister.co.uk.

B

Order 8–10 death certificate copies

When the death is registered at the local register office, order multiple certified copies. Banks, pensions, and insurers each require their own. Ordering them at registration costs **£12.50** each; ordering later can cost more and takes longer. *(HM Passport Office, GOV.UK, checked 8 September 2026)*

In England and Wales the death must be registered within **5 days** — that is 5 calendar days, weekends and bank holidays included — once the medical examiner's office has confirmed registration can go ahead. *(GOV.UK, checked 24 September 2026)* For David that points to about **17 June 2026** — an early estimate, because the 5-day clock starts at the medical examiner's confirmation, not at the date of death.

C

Open a notebook or document for the estate

Every conversation, every reference number, every estimate. You will refer back to this constantly for six months. A physical notebook works as well as a digital one — what matters is one place.

NEVER USE DAVID'S PASSWORDS

Under the `Computer Misuse Act 1990`, using a deceased person's passwords to access their accounts — even to "help" administer the estate — is a **criminal offence**. Banks, pension providers, and insurers all have formal bereavement processes. Use those instead. The funeral director or a solicitor can advise.

The matters that follow

3

Each matter below is a discrete piece of executor work. They sequence loosely — some happen in parallel — but the order shown is the one most executors find workable.

What your answers change — 3 matters need more than the standard sequence.

You were not sure whether there is a business interest.

Search Companies House (free) for directorships and shareholdings in David's name, and ask their accountant. A partnership interest shows up only in the paperwork — look for a partnership agreement or drawings on bank statements.

Do this week: run a free Companies House search on David's name.

You told us part of the estate is held in trust.

Assets in a trust are usually not part of the estate you administer — they pass under the trust deed, and the trustees (who may not be you) deal with them. But a trust in which David had an interest in possession can still count for Inheritance Tax (schedule IHT418), and a trust David set up in the last seven years is reported on IHT403. Find the trust deed and the trustees' names before you count anything as estate money.

Do this week: find the trust deed and the names of the trustees before you add anything from it to your estate inventory.

You told us there is one other executor.

Executors act jointly: the grant is made to all who will act — up to four — and each must sign the application; one who does not wish to act can renounce, or have "power reserved". *(legislation.gov.uk — Senior Courts Act 1981 s.114, checked 8 September 2026)* Decide this week who holds the estate account and who speaks to the family: one voice. A co-executor who refuses to sign a major decision is a listed reason to bring in a solicitor (section 11).

Do this week: agree who holds the estate bank account and who is the single point of contact with the family.

1

M-01 · WILL LOCATION & READING

Locate the will, confirm executors, identify beneficiaries

Read the will carefully. Confirm you are the sole executor or a co-executor. Identify all beneficiaries and the nature of each gift — **specific bequests, residuary interests, conditional gifts**. Note any expressed funeral wishes. If the will references a separate letter of wishes, locate that too.

WHEN	TIME	COST
Week 1	90 minutes	No cost

2

M-02 · TELL US ONCE

Use Tell Us Once to notify government departments in one step

At the death registration appointment, the registrar offers **Tell Us Once** — a free government service that notifies HMRC, DWP, Passport Office, DVLA, the local council, and several other departments of the death on your behalf. It takes **20 minutes** and eliminates approximately 15 separate notification calls. Use it.

Tell Us Once is offered at registration in England, Scotland and Wales. It is not available in Northern Ireland, where each department is told separately. *(DWP, GOV.UK, checked 24 September 2026)*

WHEN	TIME	COST
At registration	20 minutes	No cost

3

M-03 · PRIVATE SECTOR NOTIFICATION

Notify banks, pension providers, insurers via Life Ledger

Tell Us Once covers government departments only. Private sector institutions (banks, pension providers, insurers, utility companies, subscriptions) need separate notification. Life Ledger is a free third-party service that notifies private sector institutions in one submission and is significantly more efficient than the older Death Notification Service. Use Life Ledger at lifeledger.com.

WHEN	TIME	COST
Week 2	45 minutes	No cost

4

M-04 · THE DIRECT DEBIT DISCIPLINE

Identify direct debits from David's sole accounts before notifying the bank

Joint accounts pass to the surviving holder under survivorship and do not freeze. Sole accounts in David's name will be frozen by the bank on notification, and direct debits from those accounts will stop. Before notifying the bank, take **30 minutes** to list every direct debit running from David's sole accounts. Re-establish essential ones (utilities, mortgage, insurance) from a different account before the freeze takes effect.

WHEN	TIME	COST
Before bank notification	30 minutes	No cost

5

M-05 · ASSET INVENTORY

Build a complete list of David's assets with date-of-death values

The inventory drives the IHT decision, the probate application, and the eventual distribution. Include property (with RICS valuation if approaching IHT threshold), all bank accounts (balance at date of death), pensions, investments, vehicles, business interests, and chattels of material value. Banks, pension providers, and investment houses will provide written confirmation of date-of-death balances on request — typically within **4–6 weeks**.

WHEN	TIME	COST
Weeks 2–8	Iterative	£300–£800 RICS

6

M-06 · LIABILITIES & DEBTS

Identify outstanding debts, credit cards, and any creditor claims against the estate

Debts reduce the estate value for IHT and must be settled before distribution. Place a statutory advertisement in The Gazette and a local newspaper (Section 27 Trustee Act 1925 notice) to protect yourself against later creditor claims. The Gazette notice costs **£115.86** including VAT; the local paper sets its own price. *(The Gazette, checked 8 September 2026)* Two-month window after publication. *(legislation.gov.uk — Trustee Act 1925 s.27, checked 8 September 2026)* Standard practice for most estates.

Target date to place the notice: **7 August 2026**. If the notice goes in by then, the earliest safe distribution date is **7 October 2026** — not less than two months from publication.

WHEN	TIME	COST
Weeks 4–8	2 hours + wait	£200–£300 notices

7

M-07 · IHT DECISION

Determine which IHT route applies — excepted estate (reported on the probate application) or IHT400 (full account)

If David's net estate sits below the nil-rate band (£325,000) plus any transferable allowance from a predeceased spouse, the estate is likely an excepted estate — no separate IHT account is filed, the estate figures are given on the probate application itself (PA1P), and probate proceeds without IHT being payable. ***(HMRC, GOV.UK, checked 8 September 2026)*** If the estate is not excepted, or IHT is payable, `IHT400` is required and any IHT due must be paid before probate is granted. A solicitor or accountant can advise on the correct route — ask for the scope and a fixed fee in writing before you instruct, as the work varies widely with the estate's complexity.

WHEN	VERIFY WITH	COST
After inventory complete	STEP solicitor	Quote on scope

8

M-08 · GRANT OF PROBATE

Apply for the Grant of Probate via the online probate service

Once IHT is resolved, apply for the Grant of Probate at gov.uk/applying-for-probate. Applications made online are currently taking about **4.3 weeks** on average, and paper applications around **16 weeks**. GOV.UK's own stated timeline is "usually within 12 weeks". *(HMCTS update for probate firms, via ICAEW / HMCTS, GOV.UK, checked 8 September 2026)* Court fee is **£526** for estates over **£5,000**; estates of £5,000 or less pay no fee. *(HMCTS, GOV.UK, checked 8 September 2026)* With the Grant in hand, you have legal authority to **collect assets and distribute the estate**.

Target date to apply: **21 August 2026**.

WHEN	TIME	COST
Weeks 12–18	**2 hours + ~4.3 weeks wait**	**£526 court fee**

Working order across the first three months

4

Your estate's dates — computed from 12 June 2026

DATE	WHAT	BASIS
17 June 2026	Register the death by (early estimate)	BDRA 1953 s.16 (E&W) / RBDM(S)A 1965 s.23 (Scotland) / 5 days (NI)
7 August 2026	Place the s.27 Gazette notice by	Guidance (this pack's weeks 4–8 window)
21 August 2026	Apply for the grant (target)	Guidance
7 October 2026	Earliest safe distribution date if the notice went in by row 2	Trustee Act 1925 s.27
12 December 2026	Interim update to beneficiaries	Guidance (section 10)
31 December 2026	Inheritance Tax due; interest at 7.75% runs from 1 January 2027	IHTA 1984 s.226 / s.233
12 March 2027	Typical completion window opens	Guidance
12 June 2027	The executor's year ends; beneficiaries may press for distribution and interest on legacies runs	AEA 1925 s.44
30 June 2027	IHT400 account must be delivered	IHTA 1984 s.216

Statutory dates are fixed by the Acts named; guidance dates are this pack's own recommended timing and move with your estate. Each basis is cited, with its check date, where it appears in the body and in Appendix B. Where the date of death was not given, the rule is printed instead of the date.

WEEKS 1–2

Will located · Tell Us Once · estate notebook open

The orientation steps. Funeral arrangements may run in parallel with these.

WEEKS 2–4	**Private sector notification · Direct debit discipline** Life Ledger submission. Bank notifications staged after direct debit review.
WEEKS 4–8	**Asset inventory builds · Creditor notices placed** Date-of-death valuations gathered. Section 27 notices published in The Gazette.
WEEKS 8–10	**IHT route confirmed · Solicitor or accountant engaged** Either an excepted estate (reported on the probate application) or IHT400 (full account). The route is confirmed before applying for probate.
WEEKS 10–18	**Probate application · Grant received** Digital probate now averages 4.3 weeks from submission; paper about 16 weeks. GOV.UK states "usually within 12 weeks". Grant unlocks asset collection and distribution.
WEEKS 18+	**Asset collection · Distribution · estate accounts closed** Final phase. Beneficiaries receive their entitlements. Estate accounts prepared. Executor's role concludes.

On the costs:

A non-complex estate typically costs between
£1,400 and £4,400
in fees during executor administration — solicitor or accountant on IHT, RICS property valuation if required, statutory notices, probate court fee. Less than a single billable day of a senior solicitor working alone.

The institution-by-institution playbook 5

Every institution David held an account with has its own bereavement process. The pattern is the same. The detail varies. This is the brief on the eight you will deal with most.

The eight you will deal with most

INSTITUTION	LIMIT WITHOUT A GRANT	HOW TO NOTIFY	CHECKED
Barclays	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 068 2238 · Online form	30 August 2026
HSBC UK	£50,000	Phone 0800 085 1992 · Online form · In branch	30 August 2026
Lloyds Bank	No published figure	Phone 0800 015 0012 · Online form · In branch	30 August 2026
NatWest	No published figure	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 161 5903 · Online form	30 August 2026

INSTITUTION	LIMIT WITHOUT A GRANT	HOW TO NOTIFY	CHECKED
Santander UK	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 587 5870 · Online form	30 August 2026
Nationwide Building Society	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0333 555 1051 · Online form	30 August 2026
Halifax	No published figure	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 015 0012 · Online form	30 August 2026
NS&I (National Savings and Investments)	£5,000	Phone 08085 007 007 · Online form · In branch	30 August 2026

The full 59-institution table, every row dated, is Appendix A. The 3 you named are printed first there.

Ask for the *bereavement team* by name. Every UK high-street bank has one. They are trained, patient, and have authority the general customer-service line does not. Have ready: the death certificate (certified copy, not the original), the Grant of Probate when issued, and proof of your appointment as executor.

Banks freeze accounts on notification. They will often release funds for funeral costs directly to the funeral director from the deceased's account on receipt of the invoice — before the Grant is issued — subject to the available balance; there's no universal cap, so ask the bank directly. They will release the full balance only after the Grant. Expect **1–3 weeks** per account for the post-Grant release.

If David held joint accounts, the surviving joint holder becomes the sole holder automatically — the account does not enter the estate. This is the most common point of confusion for first-time executors.

HMRC — the personal representative process

Apply for an IHT reference number at gov.uk/paying-inheritance-tax/get-a-reference-number, at least 3 weeks before you pay any tax. HMRC will issue the number, which you need in order to make the payment.

If David received a pension or worked recently, HMRC will calculate any income-tax due to the date of death and refund overpayments to the estate. This typically arrives **6–12 weeks** after notification. Mark it on the estate account.

Do not file the deceased's last self-assessment return without checking whether their accountant is doing it. Duplicate filings cause six-month delays.

The Office of the Public Guardian (OPG)

If David had an LPA registered, the LPA *ceases to exist* at the moment of death. The attorneys' authority ends immediately — even authority they had been exercising lawfully five minutes before. Notify the OPG at gov.uk/government/publications/public-guardian-practice-note-notification-of-death. There is no fee.

Any attorney still operating accounts after death is acting without authority — gently but firmly tell them to stop, and notify the bank that the LPA is revoked.

NS&I — National Savings & Investments (Premium Bonds, Income Bonds, ISAs)

NS&I uses its own bereavement form, downloadable at nsandi.com/bereavement. The Premium Bonds are typically released within **4–6 weeks**. Any prizes won in the year of death are added to the estate, even if drawn after death. Check the prize history when you receive the closing statement.

DWP — State Pension, Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance

The fastest route is **Tell Us Once**, accessed at the register office when registering the death. One submission notifies DWP, HMRC, HM Passport Office, DVLA, and the local council. If you did not use Tell Us Once at registration, call the DWP Bereavement Service on 0800 151 2012 as soon as you can after the death — the sooner DWP knows, the smaller any overpayment to reclaim from the estate.

State Pension paid in the week of death is allowed to be retained — DWP does not claw it back. Pension payments after death must be returned. Mark these on the estate account.

The pension provider (workplace or private)

Each pension provider has its own death-claim process. Defined-contribution pots are typically paid out within **4–8 weeks** of receiving the certified death certificate plus the deceased's *expression of wish* nomination. If no nomination was filed, the pot enters the estate and follows the will.

Defined-benefit pensions (the older final-salary schemes) often pay a lump sum equal to several years' pension to the nominated dependent, plus an ongoing widow's/widower's pension to the spouse. Check both. Many estates leave significant DB lump sums unclaimed because the executor assumed there was nothing beyond the monthly payment.

The utilities — gas, electricity, water, broadband, council tax

Notify each by phone with the death certificate to hand. Most will close the account at the date of death and refund any credit to the estate. Council tax: tell the council about the death. While the property stays empty, no council tax is due until the Grant is issued, and the Class F exemption can then run for up to six months more while the property is unoccupied and still in David's name.

Do not cancel the broadband until you are sure the estate's email correspondence does not depend on it.

The IHT400 pathway 6

IHT is the single most procedurally complex part of administering an estate. The brief below is the operational sequence, not the law itself — your solicitor or accountant gives you the law. This tells you the rhythm.

When `IHT400` applies. An estate must file `IHT400` when it is *not* an excepted estate — broadly, when tax is payable, when the gross value exceeds **£325,000** (the nil-rate band, as increased by any transferable allowance), or where there are complicating features such as trusts, substantial lifetime gifts or significant foreign assets — and where it is required it is due by 30 June 2027. *(HMRC, GOV.UK, checked 8 September 2026)* *(HMRC, GOV.UK, checked 24 September 2026)* Claiming full spouse, civil-partner or charity exemption does *not* by itself force an IHT400 — an estate up to **£3m** gross can remain excepted where the value above the band passes entirely to a spouse, civil partner or charity. An excepted estate files nothing with HMRC: the estate figures are reported on the probate application itself (PA1P, or PA1A where there is no will), where the online service presents them as the Estate Information Summary. If you are not sure, default to IHT400. Filing IHT400 when not required is harmless. **Failing to file it when required triggers penalties and interest.**

(HMRC, IHT400 Notes, checked 8 September 2026)

> **The six-month deadline.**
>
> IHT must be paid (or arranged for instalment) within **six months of the end of the month of death** — David died on **12 June 2026**, so Inheritance Tax is due by 31 December 2026, and HMRC's interest runs from 1 January 2027. *(HMRC, GOV.UK, checked 24 September 2026)* HMRC charges interest from the day after that deadline — currently around **7.75%**, compounded daily (check gov.uk for the current rate, as it changes periodically). *(HMRC, GOV.UK, checked 8 September 2026)* The IHT400 account itself must be delivered within 12 months of the end of the month of death. *(HMRC, GOV.UK, checked 24 September 2026)*
>
> You can apply for the Grant of Probate before IHT is fully paid only via the instalment option for qualifying property (land, certain business assets, controlling shareholdings). All other assets must have IHT settled first. The letter with HMRC's unique code (which replaced the IHT421 receipt in January 2024) is what unlocks the Probate Registry — without it the Grant cannot be issued.

The forms in sequence. IHT400 itself is the cover form. Supporting schedules attach as needed:

> ### The IHT400 supporting schedules
>
> IHT402 — claim transferred nil-rate band from a deceased spouse (a surviving spouse's own estate can later use this against David's unused NRB).
>
> IHT403 — gifts in the last seven years. Common pitfall: small regular gifts out of income are exempt under Section 21 IHTA 1984 and should be entered as such, not as PETs.
>
> IHT404 — joint assets. Joint bank accounts pass by survivorship; jointly owned property may pass as tenants-in-common (estate share) or joint tenants (whole passes to survivor). Check the Land Registry title.
>
> IHT405 — houses and land. Each property valued separately at market value at date of death. Use a RICS surveyor for any property above **£500,000**; HMRC will challenge informal valuations.
>
> IHT406 — bank accounts and savings. Balance at date of death, not at notification.
>
> IHT407 — household and personal goods. Reasonable estimate; HMRC does not expect itemised inventories unless the estate is unusually high-value or contains specialist items (art, antiques, jewellery above **£1,500** per item). *(HMRC, form IHT407, checked 8 September 2026)*
>
> IHT409 — pensions. Defined-benefit lump sums are often outside the estate (discretionary trust). Defined-contribution pots may be inside or outside depending on the scheme rules and nomination — confirm with the provider in writing.
>
> IHT410 — life assurance. Policies written in trust are outside the estate. Policies not in trust form part of it.

> ### Common IHT400 errors
>
> **Missed pension death benefits.** If David had a defined-benefit pension, ask the trustees in writing whether a death-benefit lump sum is payable. Many executors do not know to ask.
>
> **Gifts in last seven years.** Bank statements going back seven years are the audit trail. Regular gifts out of income (exempt) look identical to PETs (taxable) on a statement — distinguishing them requires the income record.

Business assets misclassified. Business Property Relief at 100% (or 50%) only applies to qualifying trading businesses. *(HM Treasury / HMRC, GOV.UK / HMRC, GOV.UK, checked 8 September 2026)* Investment companies and most BTL portfolios do not qualify. The **April 2026** reform capped combined APR+BPR at **£2.5m** per person (**£5m** couple — allowance transferable between spouses). The original **£1m** proposal (October 2024) was raised to **£2.5m** on 23 December 2025 before Royal Assent. Above the cap, relief drops to 50%.

Spouse exemption misapplied. Transfers to a UK-domiciled surviving spouse are exempt without limit. Transfers to a non-UK-domiciled spouse are exempt only up to £325,000 unless the surviving spouse elects to be UK-domiciled for IHT.

The grant of probate sequence 7

Probate is the court's confirmation that you, as named executor, have authority to administer the estate. Without it, no bank releases funds, no buyer can complete a property purchase, no investment provider transfers shares.

The application route. Apply online at gov.uk/applying-for-probate. Applications made online are currently taking about **4.3 weeks** on average, and paper applications (used when the will is complex, the executor is non-UK resident, or there is a caveat) around **16 weeks**. GOV.UK's own stated timeline is "usually within 12 weeks". *(HMCTS update for probate firms, via ICAEW / HMCTS, GOV.UK, checked 8 September 2026)* The court fee is **£526** for estates over **£5,000**; estates of £5,000 or less pay no fee. *(HMCTS, GOV.UK, checked 8 September 2026)*

What you need before you apply

The original will (not a copy). The death certificate (certified copy). HMRC's letter with the `unique code`, confirming the IHT400 has been processed and IHT paid or being paid in instalments. A schedule of estate assets and liabilities. Your own ID. The probate application fee.

If the original will is missing and only a copy exists, the application becomes a Grant of Probate Limited — a more complex process requiring evidence of why the original is unavailable and that it has not been revoked. This adds **8–16 weeks**.

When probate goes sideways

Caveat entered. A disputing relative or creditor can enter a caveat at the Probate Registry, blocking the Grant for six months at a time. Removing it requires either the caveator's consent or a court application. If a caveat appears, instruct a probate solicitor immediately — DIY is not appropriate at this point.

Missing original will. See above. Most often resolved by a Grant Limited if the copy is comprehensive and witnessed.

Intestacy when the family assumed a will existed. If no valid will is found, the estate passes under the Intestacy Rules — which may not match what David intended. Search every drawer, every solicitor they ever used, the National Will Register at nationalwillregister.co.uk. Do not apply for a Grant of Letters of Administration (the intestacy version) until you have exhausted the search.

The estate accounts framework 8

Keeping proper estate accounts is good practice for every executor. A court can require you to produce them under Section 25(b) of the Administration of Estates Act 1925 if a beneficiary applies for an order. The estate accounts are what you produce to meet that standard.

The accounts have three sections: *capital account* (assets at death, what was sold, what was distributed in specie), *income account* (income received during administration — interest, dividends, rent), and *distribution account* (what each beneficiary received and when).

What records to keep

A receipt for every disbursement. Bank statements for the executor's account from the date it is opened to the date the estate is wound up. Correspondence with HMRC, the probate registry, the beneficiaries, and any professional advisers. Valuations of every asset at date of death.

The records must be retained for **twelve years** after the estate is wound up. This is the limitation period for beneficiary claims under section 22 of the Limitation Act 1980. *(legislation.gov.uk — Limitation Act 1980 s.22, checked 8 September 2026)*

The R185 certificate. If the estate paid income to beneficiaries during administration (typically from interest or rental income), you must issue each beneficiary an R185 (Estate Income) certificate showing the gross income and any tax already paid by the estate. The beneficiary uses this on their self-assessment. Issue the R185 within **60 days** of the end of each tax year during administration.

When to bring in an accountant. Estates with ongoing income, foreign assets, or business interests usually justify a probate accountant. The cost (typically **£750–£2,500**) is paid from the estate, not from your own pocket, and the time saved is significant. Estates below **£500,000** with no business interests and no foreign assets can usually be administered without one if you are methodical.

The asset realisation order 9

Not every asset should be sold immediately. The order in which you realise the estate has tax consequences that compound over the administration period.

The default sequence

1. Cash deposits first. No CGT, no valuation complexity. Move closed-account balances into the executor's account as each bank releases.

2. Investment portfolio. CGT is uplifted at death — the base cost for the estate is the market value at date of death, not what David originally paid. Selling promptly locks in this uplift. Holding for years exposes the estate to subsequent CGT on any further gains.

3. Pension lump sums. Often outside the estate (DC schemes with binding nomination) and paid directly to beneficiaries. Where they are inside the estate, they typically arrive **4–8 weeks** after notification with valuation as at date of death.

4. Property. There is no automatic private-residence exemption for executors, and no two-year grace period — this is a common and expensive misunderstanding. What actually helps you is that on death the property is rebased to its **probate (date-of-death) value**, so a prompt arm's-length sale at close to that figure usually produces little or no gain. That is a base-cost uplift, not a relief: if the property rises in value before you sell, the estate pays CGT on the increase. Private-residence relief reaches a personal representative only in a narrow case — where the property was, both before and after the death, the only or main home of one or more individuals entitled to at least **75%** of the net sale proceeds — and you must claim it: meeting the conditions does not give it to you automatically. If any CGT is due, it must be reported and paid to HMRC within **60 days** of the sale completing, even if the rest of the estate is not yet wound up — missing that deadline brings interest and a penalty. The estate also has its own tax-free allowance of **£3,000** for the tax year of death and each of the next two tax years, which comes off any gain before tax is worked out. If the property is to be transferred to a beneficiary in specie rather than sold, the beneficiary inherits the date-of-death base cost.

5. Personal possessions. No CGT on items below **£6,000** individual sale value. *(HMRC, GOV.UK, checked 8 September 2026)* Above that threshold, CGT applies. Most household contents fall below; specific high-value items (jewellery, art, classic cars) need their own treatment.

When to delay. If a property is expected to appreciate and the estate has cash flow to cover IHT and beneficiary expectations, delaying property sale by **12–18 months** is sometimes the right call. The trade-off is the CGT exposure and the **executor's continued personal liability** for the property (insurance, council tax, maintenance) until disposal.

The beneficiaries communication brief 10

Beneficiaries are entitled to information. They are not entitled to running commentary on every executor decision. Striking the balance is the single hardest interpersonal task of the role.

What you owe each beneficiary

A copy of the will (once the Grant is issued — until then, the will is not a public document).

A schedule of estate assets and liabilities at date of death, once compiled.

An interim update at six months explaining where the administration stands.

The estate accounts at the end of administration.

Their R185 certificates if income was distributed during administration.

What you do NOT owe

Justification for every executor decision. You have discretion; exercise it.

Real-time updates on bank-release timing, HMRC processing, property valuations.

Copies of solicitor correspondence (legally privileged to the estate, not to beneficiaries).

The reasons for any specific bequest in the will. The will speaks for itself.

The 12-month rule. By long-standing convention (the *executor's year*), executors have one year from death to administer the estate before interest becomes payable on undistributed legacies — for David's estate that is 12 June 2027. *(legislation.gov.uk — Administration of Estates Act 1925 s.44, checked 8 September 2026)* A straightforward estate takes **6–12 months**, one with property to sell or inheritance tax to agree **12–18**

months; if yours is going beyond 12 months and you have not communicated why, beneficiaries will start to assume the worst. A brief written update at month 9 explaining the cause of delay (HMRC backlog, property sale, IHT instalments) prevents most conflict.

> **The sentence that defuses most conflict**
>
> *"The estate is more complex than initially appeared, and I want to make sure I get the IHT position right before distributing. I will write again at month nine with a firm timeline."*
>
> This says: I am working. I am not hiding. I will report. It commits to nothing legally and to the right thing operationally. Use it.

Conflict management 11

Most estate disputes are not about money. They are about feeling excluded, surprised, or disrespected by the process. The legal route is expensive, slow, and rarely produces the outcome the disputant actually wanted.

The early signal. When a beneficiary writes asking for documents, valuations, or explanations more than three times in two months — and your replies are not landing — escalate before they do. A short call (not an email) acknowledging the frustration and proposing a single hour-long meeting with the estate's solicitor present usually resets the relationship.

> **When to bring in a solicitor**
>
> A caveat is entered at the Probate Registry.
>
> A beneficiary threatens a claim under the Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependants) Act 1975.
>
> A co-executor disagrees on a major decision and refuses to sign.
>
> An expected asset is not where the will says it should be (missing investment account, transferred property).
>
> The estate is insolvent — debts exceed assets. Stop distributing immediately and take advice.

> **Mediation before litigation**
>
> Contested probate costs £5,000–£100,000+ per side depending on how far the matter proceeds, and court proceedings take 12–24 months. Most are settled before judgment. Mediation through a body such as STEP's Contentious Trusts and Estates Specialist register, or via a probate-specialist mediator, typically resolves disputes in 1–3 sessions at £200–£500 per hour. Propose it early. Most disputants accept once they see the alternative cost.

> **If you need to step down**
>
> If circumstances change — health, bandwidth, family rift — you can renounce the role before you have *intermeddled* (taken any substantive executor action). Submit `Form PA15` with the original will to the Probate Registry. After intermeddling, **renunciation requires court approval** under Section 50 Administration of Justice Act 1985.

The substitute executor (named in the will) or the residuary beneficiary then steps up. There is no shame in this. Continuing as executor when you cannot do the work is worse than handing over.

Closing the estate 12

The estate is wound up only when distributions are complete, accounts are signed off, HMRC has confirmed the IHT position is final, and the discharge letters from the beneficiaries are in your file.

The closing sequence

1. Interim distributions. Once the major liabilities are known and the asset position is firm — typically **6–9 months** in — make interim distributions of clear legacies. Reserve enough to cover any outstanding liability plus a 10% contingency.

2. IHT30 — clearance certificate. Apply to HMRC for confirmation that no further IHT is due using form **IHT30**. Issued within **6–8 weeks**. Once received, it discharges you from further IHT on the assets and values set out in the certificate — but **it is not absolute**. Clearance gives no protection at all where there has been fraud or a failure to disclose material facts, and it does not bind HMRC if further property later comes to light, if a deed of variation, disclaimer or a similar change to who inherits alters the tax position, or if too much of a nil-rate band — or of the transferable business and farm relief allowance — was later found to have been carried over from an earlier spouse's or civil partner's death. If the estate claimed either from an earlier death, keep the calculation: HMRC can revisit that figure separately from anything you disclosed about this estate. Disclose fully and keep the evidence; that, not the certificate alone, is what protects you.

3. Final estate accounts. Compile the capital, income, and distribution accounts. Send to each residuary beneficiary for approval.

4. Discharge letter. Each beneficiary signs a letter acknowledging the accounts are correct and releasing you from further liability. This does not extinguish your statutory duty of care, but it materially reduces exposure.

5. Final distribution. The residue is distributed once discharges are in.

6. Close the executor's bank account. Move any final balance to the residuary beneficiary. Keep the account open for a month after final distribution in case of any late credit (HMRC refund, missed dividend).

7. Archive. Estate records retained twelve years. Cloud archive plus a physical archive box is standard practice. Tell the residuary beneficiary where the archive is held in case of later query.

The 12-year liability tail

Even after the estate is closed and discharges signed, a beneficiary or creditor can bring a claim for up to **twelve years** from the date of administration. *(legislation.gov.uk — Limitation Act 1980 s.22, checked 8 September 2026)* The discharge letter materially reduces this risk but does not eliminate it. Keep the records.

Every UK bank's bereavement position A

You told us there are bank accounts in the estate. The table below covers every UK bank and building society, not only the high-street eight — small estates often turn out to hold two or three accounts the household did not know about.

The banks you named — first

You named 4 institutions. 3 of their bereavement positions are below, each row read on the date shown; each publishes a limit below which no grant is needed. The full table, for anything that surfaces later, follows.

INSTITUTION	LIMIT WITHOUT A GRANT	HOW TO NOTIFY	CHECKED
Barclays	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 068 2238 · Online form	30 August 2026
Nationwide Building Society	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0333 555 1051 · Online form	30 August 2026
Leeds Building Society	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 03452 682 642 · In branch	6 September 2026

Chelsea Building Society is not among the 59 institutions whose bereavement positions were read for this table (last read 24 September 2026) — ask for the bereavement team by name and take the position from them directly, in writing.

INSTITUTION	LIMIT WITHOUT A GRANT	HOW TO NOTIFY	CHECKED
Barclays	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 068 2238 · Online form	30 August 2026
HSBC UK	£50,000	Phone 0800 085 1992 · Online form · In branch	30 August 2026
Lloyds Bank	No published figure	Phone 0800 015 0012 · Online form · In branch	30 August 2026
NatWest	No published figure	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 161 5903 · Online form	30 August 2026
Santander UK	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 587 5870 · Online form	30 August 2026
Nationwide Building Society	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0333 555 1051 · Online form	30 August 2026
Halifax	No published figure	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 015 0012 · Online form	30 August 2026
NS&I (National Savings and Investments)	£5,000	Phone 08085 007 007 · Online form · In branch	30 August 2026
AIB (NI) / Allied Irish Bank GB	£25,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0345 646 0320 · In branch	6 September 2026

INSTITUTION	LIMIT WITHOUT A GRANT	HOW TO NOTIFY	CHECKED
Al Rayan Bank	No published figure — Al Rayan Bank publishes no general small-estate release ceiling in pounds.	Death Notification Service · Online form · By post	6 September 2026
Aldermore Bank	£35,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0345 604 2678	6 September 2026
Atom Bank	No published figure	Death Notification Service · Phone 0333 399 0050 · Online form	6 September 2026
Bank of Ireland UK	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Online form · In branch	6 September 2026
Bank of Scotland	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 056 0073 · Online form	6 September 2026
Chase UK	No published figure — Chase UK publishes no small-estate release figure at all.	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 376 3333 · In branch	6 September 2026
Coutts	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 020 7957 2424 · Online form	6 September 2026
Coventry Building Society	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 587 4565 · Online form	6 September 2026
Cumberland Building Society	£30,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 01228 403141 · Online form	6 September 2026
Danske Bank UK	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0345 600 2882 · Online form	6 September 2026
Darlington Building Society	£30,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 01325 366366 · In branch	6 September 2026
Dudley Building Society	£15,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 01384 231414 · Online form	6 September 2026
first direct	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0113 276 6669 · Online form	6 September 2026
Furness Building Society	£30,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 781 4311 · Online form	6 September 2026
Handelsbanken UK	£20,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 470 8000 · Online form	6 September 2026
Hinckley & Rugby Building Society	£15,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 434 6343 · Online form	6 September 2026

INSTITUTION	LIMIT WITHOUT A GRANT	HOW TO NOTIFY	CHECKED
Investec Bank UK (Private Bank)	No published figure — Investec Private Bank publishes no small-estate release ceiling.	Death Notification Service · Phone 0330 123 3655	6 September 2026
Leeds Building Society	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 03452 682 642 · In branch	6 September 2026
Leek Building Society	£30,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0808 281 9308 · In branch	6 September 2026
M&S Bank	No published figure — M&S Bank publishes no fixed release ceiling.	Death Notification Service · Phone 0345 300 6139 · Online form	6 September 2026
Mansfield Building Society	£20,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 01623 676350 · In branch	6 September 2026
Market Harborough Building Society	£25,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 01858 412412 · Online form	6 September 2026
Marsden Building Society	£15,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 01282 525253 · In branch	6 September 2026
Metro Bank	£25,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0203 824 4815 · By post	6 September 2026
Monmouthshire Building Society	£35,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 01633 844 340 · In branch	6 September 2026
Monzo	£25,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 802 1281 · Online form	6 September 2026
Newbury Building Society	No published figure	Death Notification Service · Phone 01635 555700 · Online form	6 September 2026
Newcastle Building Society	£30,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0345 734 4345 · Online form	6 September 2026
Nottingham Building Society	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0344 481 4444 · In branch	6 September 2026
Paragon Bank	£20,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 052 2222 · Online form	6 September 2026
Principality Building Society	£39,999	Death Notification Service · Phone 0330 333 4000 · In branch	6 September 2026

INSTITUTIO N	LIMIT WITHOUT A GRANT	HOW TO NOTIFY	CHECKED
Progressive Building Society	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 029 4997 · In branch	6 September 2026
Revolut UK	No published figure	Death Notification Service	6 September 2026
Royal Bank of Scotland	No published figure	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 161 5904 · Online form	6 September 2026
Saffron Building Society	£15,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 072 1100 · Online form	6 September 2026
Shawbrook Bank	No published figure	Death Notification Service · Phone 0330 123 2734	6 September 2026
Skipton Building Society	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0345 266 1209 · In branch	6 September 2026
Starling Bank	£30,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 020 7930 4450 · In branch	6 September 2026
Tesco Bank	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0345 071 6153 · By post	6 September 2026
The Cambridge Building Society	£20,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0345 601 3344 · Online form	6 September 2026
The Co-operative Bank	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 03457 212 212 · Online form	6 September 2026
The Melton Building Society	£20,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 01664 414141 · Online form	6 September 2026
Tipton & Coseley Building Society	£15,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0121 557 2551 · Online form	24 September 2026
Triodos Bank UK	£25,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0330 355 0355 · By post	6 September 2026
TSB Bank	No published figure	Death Notification Service · Phone 0345 835 7834 · Online form	6 September 2026
Ulster Bank	No published figure	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 096 3612 · Online form	6 September 2026
Virgin Money	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 0121590 · Online form	6 September 2026

INSTITUTIO N	LIMIT WITHOUT A GRANT	HOW TO NOTIFY	CHECKED
West Bromwich Building Society	£30,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0800 280 0597 · Online form	6 September 2026
Yorkshire Building Society	£50,000	Death Notification Service · Phone 0345 166 9229 · Online form	6 September 2026
Zopa Bank	No published figure — Zopa Bank publishes no small-estate release ceiling.	Death Notification Service · Online form · By post	6 September 2026

Each figure above is that institution's own published release limit, read from its own guidance and checked no earlier than 30 August 2026; where an institution publishes no figure, its stated position is given instead. Limits move; the bereavement team states the current one.

Sources and check dates

B

Each figure in this brief carries its own check date; this table gathers them. A figure that could not be re-checked on the day this brief was prepared is marked "not dated" rather than given a date it has not earned.

FIGURE	SOURCE	CHECKED
Probate application fee (estates over £5,000)	HMCTS, GOV.UK	10 September 2026
Probate application fee-free threshold (estates of £5,000 or less pay no fee)	HMCTS, GOV.UK	8 September 2026
IHT nil-rate band	HMRC, GOV.UK	8 September 2026
HMRC late-payment interest rate (Bank of England base rate + 4 percentage points)	HMRC, GOV.UK	8 September 2026
Standard IHT payment due date (six-month rule)	HMRC, GOV.UK	24 September 2026
IHT400 account delivery / reporting deadline (12 months) — distinct from the 6-month payment deadline	HMRC, GOV.UK	24 September 2026
Penalties for delivering the IHT400 account late	HMRC, IHT400 Notes	8 September 2026
Death must be registered within 5 days of ME confirmation (England & Wales)	GOV.UK	24 September 2026

FIGURE	SOURCE	CHECKED
Tell Us Once — 28-day window to use the service after registration	DWP, GOV.UK	24 September 2026
Gazette deceased estates notice (s.27 TA 1925), online submission	The Gazette	8 September 2026
Certified copy of a death certificate (GRO / registrar), England & Wales	HM Passport Office, GOV.UK	8 September 2026
Combined Business/Agricultural Property Relief 100% allowance for a couple, and the 50% rate above it	HM Treasury / HMRC, GOV.UK	8 September 2026
Business Property Relief (BPR) rate/ allowance for qualifying trading-company shares (regime from 6 April 2026)	HM Treasury / HMRC, GOV.UK	8 September 2026
Business Property Relief (BPR) minimum ownership/qualifying period	HMRC, GOV.UK	8 September 2026
HMCTS current average probate wait, by application channel (digital vs paper)	HMCTS update for probate firms, via ICAEW	8 September 2026
GOV.UK published expectation for time to grant (the stated expectation, not a measured statistic)	HMCTS, GOV.UK	8 September 2026
Capital gains tax annual exempt amount (individuals and personal representatives)	HMRC, GOV.UK	8 September 2026
The "executor's year" — a personal representative need not distribute the estate before one year from the death	legislation.gov.uk — Administration of Estates Act 1925 s.44	8 September 2026
The Gazette s.27 deceased estates notice — minimum notice period before an executor may safely distribute	legislation.gov.uk — Trustee Act 1925 s.27	8 September 2026
Schedule IHT407 — individual household/personal item must be itemised separately once worth £1,500 or more	HMRC, form IHT407	8 September 2026
Capital Gains Tax personal-possessions (chattels) exemption — no CGT below this per-item disposal value	HMRC, GOV.UK	8 September 2026
Limitation period for a claim to a deceased person's estate (personal estate, under a will or on intestacy)	legislation.gov.uk — Limitation Act 1980 s.22	8 September 2026

FIGURE	SOURCE	CHECKED
Maximum number of executors/ administrators who may be named on a single grant of representation	legislation.gov.uk — Senior Courts Act 1981 s.114	8 September 2026

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Statutory and market figures are each checked against their own source and dated beside the figure; the oldest check among those printed is 8 September 2026. Prepared from customer-maintained records.

Source instruments: E-01 · R-01 · P-07 · P-02.

Standard Index Group — in formation · England & Wales