

GROWING YOUR PRACTICE WITH LEGAL SERVICES



**REGULATION
& CONDUCT**

CONTENTS

A practical guide	2
Case study insights	4
Top tips for marketing legal services	7
Key marketing messages	9
How ICAEW supports you	11
Quick start checklist	12



A PRACTICAL GUIDE



This guide focuses on the benefits of your firm being accredited for legal services and how to make the most of this growth opportunity. Leveraging your legal services accreditation allows your firm to open up new revenue opportunities and strengthen client relationships. This guide is aimed primarily at those practitioners who have already started on the legal services journey.

PROBATE

In the 12 years since ICAEW became an approved regulator of probate services, more than 300 accountancy firms have jumped at the opportunity to broaden their practice and enable their partners and employees to offer a wider range of services to clients. ICAEW-accredited firms are now also authorised to offer the additional reserved legal activity of the administration of oaths.



£7 TRILLION

is expected to transfer between generations in the UK alone.*



More than 250,000 probate applications are typically made in England and Wales each year, and with probate specialists earning between 1%-5% of the value of the estate, the size of the market for probate services is impressive**. This presents an exciting opportunity for firms that invest in offering probate services, not least because it is such a close fit with the estate management and inheritance tax work that accountants have been carrying out for years.

'Probate is something we use to differentiate ourselves. We all want to add different services to our offerings.'

Julia Gallagher,
Curo Chartered Accountants

*www.vanguard.co.uk/professional/adviser-support/the-great-wealth-transfer

**www.moneysavingexpert.com

'Build recognition of your firm as a probate practice in your local community.'

Huw Roberts,
Sole practitioner

Having already invested in building trusted and strong relationships, it is logical that clients want their accountant to be able to handle all elements of probate at what is likely to be a difficult time.

As you begin offering legal services, it's a great opportunity to strengthen your existing client relationships while introducing your practice to new clients. Promoting your new service can help extend your reach, and as those new relationships grow, you'll also create opportunities to offer your wider range of accountancy services.

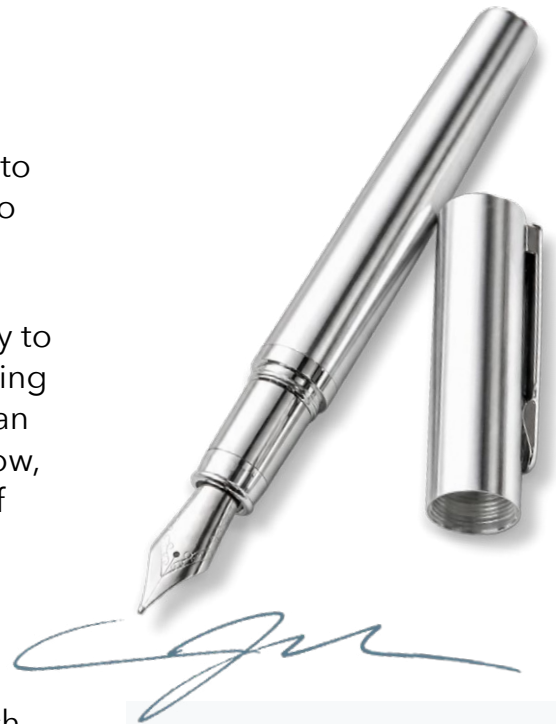
ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS

The administration of oaths is a reserved legal activity which can only be conducted by an authorised person under Section 13 of the Legal Services Act. ICAEW Probate Practitioners are automatically authorised to provide this service and can use the title 'Commissioner of Oaths' when acting in this capacity.

Commissioners for Oaths are authorised to administer oaths or affirmations and take statutory declarations and affidavits. Clients often need oaths or declarations at important moments in their lives and marketing this service positions your firm as a convenient legal services provider to new and existing clients.

While accreditation allows you to carry out this activity, there is no obligation to do so. However, it is an opportunity to enhance your services by offering a low-cost straightforward legal service that does not need significant investment or operational change.

For further information about offering oaths and affirmations read our [FAQs](#).



'It is a natural progression for an accountancy practice and is increasingly important as traditional compliance work becomes less valuable to clients.'

Paul Dell,
Raffingers

CASE STUDY INSIGHTS



RAFFINGERS: THINKING AHEAD

'Firms taking on probate services need to plan for long-term growth.'

Nine-partner Essex-based firm Raffingers already offered services such as wealth management along with more traditional inheritance tax planning. This made probate a good choice to add to its portfolio, says partner Paul Dell.

'It's a natural progression for an accountancy practice and is increasingly important as traditional compliance work becomes less valuable to clients,' he says. 'Any firm that goes into this should assume that it will take a while for the practice to build up.'

In most cases the firm has dealt with all the probate matters itself: in a couple, it has worked with a friendly solicitor. 'We have an informal arrangement with a firm that came to see us about taking on contentious work or if we needed legal assistance during the process,' Dell says. 'There have been a couple of occasions where wills have been badly drafted so we asked them to deal with the deeds of variation and trusts set up under the will.'

Recently, Raffingers received a probate instruction from a legal firm. 'The firm had lost its probate partner and needed someone to take a probate assignment on. We did the probate and ended up achieving a 95% saving in inheritance tax for the client,' says Dell.

Raffingers is already on track with its original projections of how much income it would be generating from probate services. But its eyes are very much on the longer-term prize. 'In 10 years accountants should have this market sewn up,' Dell states. 'Probate is a natural fit for us: a systemised process that is tax-based.'

Dell was a sole practitioner before merging with Raffingers. Would he have considered probate if he were still in his own firm? 'Absolutely. I don't think there's any real barrier to moving into probate. Because we have long-term relationships with clients, who better than us to be the first port of call?'

ADVICE FOR OTHER PRACTITIONERS

'Getting the message out to your client base, perhaps via an email every few months, does not need an awful lot of resource once you're up and running. Focus on the messaging that using you has to be the most efficient route for clients.'

HUW ROBERTS: BUILDING A PROBATE PRACTICE

'Build recognition of your firm as a probate practice in your local community.'

Cardiff-based sole practitioner, Huw Roberts, had been an accountant for 30 years when he decided to apply for probate authorisation. He had helped close someone's affairs and had enjoyed the work. 'When ICAEW announced its probate application I thought: I'm doing this,' he says.

Studying again after such a long gap was inevitably a challenge, but Roberts says he learned a lot from the SWAT course. 'By the time you've passed the exam, you're ready to start work,' he says. 'There's a learning curve when it comes to the various forms involved, but you soon get the hang of it.'

Probate now
accounts for
40%
of Roberts' services.

The first year after he was authorised, probate and related services accounted for about 10% of Roberts' workload. Just a few years later, the proportion is rising to nearly 40%. In addition to the probate work, many clients ask him to review their wills and inheritance tax position.

Part of the reason for this growth is his clear passion for the service. 'You're working with a family in grief and helping them at a difficult time. It is important to ensure that their financial matters are dealt with in a personal and professional manner,' Roberts says.

Passion alone is not enough to get the service out there, and Roberts does a lot of marketing. The main method that works for him is a monthly newsletter emailed to everyone on his mailing list, which covers tax and other financial matters as well as probate. 'This means I'm in front of the client 12 times a year, so they are constantly reminded of what I can do for them,' he says.

Practitioners who are serious about building a probate practice need to create time to build this new business line, Roberts advises. 'There's always other work that needs attention. But you have to say, I'm going to spend the next three hours developing the probate practice.'

He credits his success to providing a professional service, promptly and at a competitive price. 'There are huge opportunities out there for firms that do this right. But above all, clients need to be made aware that the probate service is available.'

ADVICE FOR OTHER PRACTITIONERS

'An up-to-date personalised website is essential to provide prospective clients with information on the services available. Roberts recommends targeted local advertising. Build recognition of your firm as a probate practice in your local community.'

WARD WILLIAMS: CLIENT CHOICE

‘Clients appreciate the flexibility.’

Offering different levels of service is helping Ward Williams build its probate work. Ward Williams is a six-partner practice that took advantage of the potential to provide probate services as soon as ICAEW became an approved licensing authority. ‘While we couldn’t offer probate before, we had helped clients navigate the process and knew the procedures involved,’ says partner Malcolm McKinnell.

happy to do most of the work but who wants an expert to be available to answer any technical questions,’ says McKinnell.

In the second package the family members do much of the information gathering and cash distribution, while Ward Williams prepares the tax returns, probate application and estate accounts. And in the third package the firm does everything. ‘Clients appreciate the flexibility,’ says McKinnell.

‘Accountants have an advantage over other probate practitioners as they have long client relationships.’

‘When family members come to us a few weeks after a death, they talk to someone they know,’ says McKinnell. ‘We have much of the financial and historical information on our files. This takes away a lot of the workload from the family at a time of stress.’

Ward Williams decided to offer three probate packages. The first is one in which the executors apply for probate by themselves, with the firm available to answer any questions or review the forms as required. ‘This is usually taken up when there is a professional in the family who is

Recently Ward Williams has produced a handbook on probate and estate administration, which it has sent to all its clients. Soon the firm will be included as the preferred probate practitioner in brochures that three local hospital trusts hand out to the bereaved: up to 30,000 of these brochures are distributed each year.

‘Making people aware that accountants can and do offer probate can be the hardest part,’ says McKinnell. ‘Changing the public’s mindset and perception is important. That’s why we’re happy to be in the NHS Trust brochures and we try to keep the momentum up with local marketing and articles in local magazines.’

ADVICE FOR OTHER PRACTITIONERS

‘Market to the existing client base first. Get something out to all your clients. Many people don’t know what probate is so use education as a way of soft marketing. It’s a lot easier to market to your existing clients – and it makes good sense for them to come to you.’

TOP TIPS FOR MARKETING LEGAL SERVICES

Marketing is an essential part of getting any new service off the ground. Here are our top tips on how best to concentrate your efforts to make potential clients aware of your services.



1. RAISE AWARENESS WITH YOUR EXISTING CLIENTS

- Promote new services to existing clients. Accountancy firms usually meet their clients every year, so make sure you update clients on any changes in your service offering when you meet.
- Generate regular client communications to communicate your service offering. Some firms use monthly newsletters to talk about general financial news and link this to their service offerings. Others add a brief paragraph about services to their annual letters.
- Ensure all client-facing staff know about the services you offer and encourage them to engage clients in a discussion rather than passing them to another practitioner.
- Many people are unfamiliar with probate, the administration of oaths and statutory declarations. Therefore, will value your professional support and guidance. Consider preparing some factsheets that give an overview of the process and conclude with a brief paragraph on your services, including contact details.

2. MAXIMISE THE POWER OF NETWORKING

- Run or attend seminars on related topics, such as wealth management and estate planning.
- Network with solicitors, financial planners, and other professionals who might refer clients.

3. EXTEND YOUR REACH WITH DIGITAL MARKETING

- Consider all potential cross marketing opportunities and target your marketing to those clients likely to require legal services the most, such as high-net-worth individuals.
- Use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to develop your messaging where allowed – however, note that the use of generative AI is not suitable for tasks that share confidential or privileged information. This includes the sharing of client-specific information.
- Use social media channels to promote your service range. Consider paid social advertising and use local forums.
- Make sure your website has a prominent description of your services and fee structure.
- Target the local market. Consider writing articles for your local newspaper or place adverts. Ideally, do this regularly so potential clients get used to associating your name with probate, estate administration work and the administration of oaths if you are offering this service.
- Use the ICAEW probate or probate and oaths accredited logo, on your business cards, letterhead, website and email signature.
- Be mindful not to hard sell legal services. It can be a sensitive area and should be offered in an appropriate way. Key marketing messages can be found on [page 9](#).

OUR DIGITAL MARKETING FINDINGS

Know your audience

Understand who your target audience is, their interests, and their online behaviours. Tailor your content to meet their preferences.

Be consistent

Maintain a regular posting schedule to keep your audience engaged.

Analyse

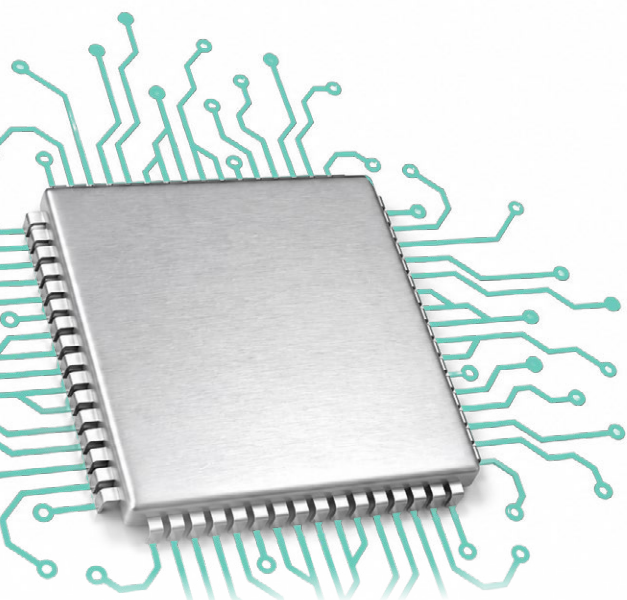
Monitor your performance using analytic tools. Analyse what types of content perform best and adjust your strategy accordingly.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

AI can be helpful and used to:

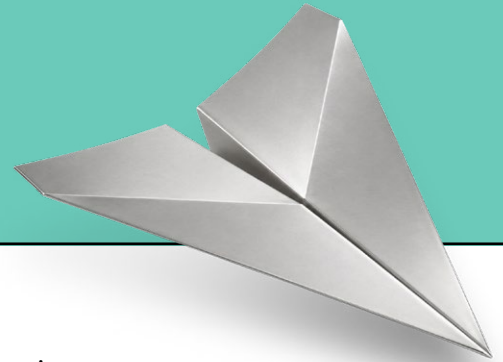
- Conduct competitor research
- Analyse data
- Draft first versions of blog posts, then human-edit for tone and compliance
- Suggest keywords for your legal services webpage

Always prioritise the security and confidentiality of your clients' information.



KEY MARKETING MESSAGES

Consider using some of these key messages in your marketing materials.



ACCOUNTANTS CAN DO PROBATE

You are already looking after your clients' personal tax, inheritance tax planning and wealth management, advise them that you can also handle their probate requirements.

Handle probate with the firm that knows you best.

Making probate easier: efficient services from a familiar firm.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS

Providing you with a professional service for oaths, affirmations, and statutory declarations at a firm you already know and trust.

Regulated by ICAEW so that you can be confident your documents are in safe hands.

Professional oath administration from the firm you already trust.

From affidavits to statutory declarations, we offer a straightforward service.

Court proceedings can move quickly. Our authorised Commissioners for Oaths provide a prompt and reliable service, avoiding unnecessary delays.

YOU ARE A TRUSTED ADVISER

You see your clients regularly and develop a detailed understanding of their financial affairs over time, often building trusted relationships with their families sometimes even spanning multiple generations.

Your trusted adviser, now here for probate services.

Your chartered accountant, now here for probate and oaths services.

Helping you and your family navigate probate with confidence.

COMPETITIVE PRICING

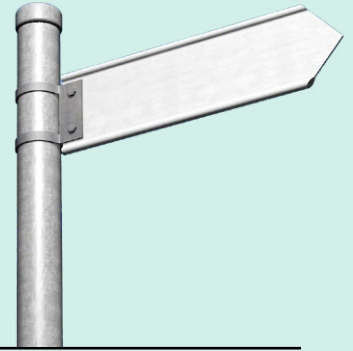
Most accredited firms charge on a time basis or a fixed fee versus the percentage of estate basis other providers typically use.

Competitive, transparent pricing.

Fixed-fee probate services—know your costs upfront.

Accessible, reliable services from a firm you know.

HOW ICAEW SUPPORTS YOU



PROBATE RESOURCES

icaew.com/probateresources

ICAEW supports its probate-accredited firms with preparation for monitoring visits, professional development, and resources including:



PROBATE NEWS

icaew.com/probatenews

A regulatory update containing the latest probate technical guidance and best practice information. Read the [latest issues](#) or [sign up](#) to receive via email.



PROBATE FAQs

[Read our Probate FAQs](#)

Explore answers to frequently asked questions from firms and practitioners offering reserved legal services.



OATHS FAQs

[Read our Oaths FAQs](#)

We answer the top questions we receive regarding the administration of oaths.

CONTACT US



[Visit our firm's information web page](#)



+44 (0)1908 248 250

QUICK START CHECKLIST:

GROWING YOUR LEGAL SERVICES PRACTICE



UPDATE YOUR WEBSITE

- ☐ Add a clear probate and/or oaths page.
- ☐ Include fee structures (fixed fee/time basis).
- ☐ Display the ICAEW probate-accredited and/or oaths logo.

ENGAGE YOUR EXISTING CLIENTS

- ☐ Mention all of your services in annual letters and meetings.
- ☐ Add a legal services update to newsletters and bulletins.
- ☐ Prepare a client-friendly factsheet explaining all of your services.



EQUIP YOUR TEAM

- ☐ Brief all client-facing staff on your services.
- ☐ Encourage soft conversations (rather than hard selling).
- ☐ Create standard responses/scripts for FAQs.

GET VISIBLE ONLINE

- ☐ Share legal services content on social media.
- ☐ Consider paid adverts or local forums.
- ☐ Write short articles or blogs on estate planning.

BUILD YOUR REFERRAL NETWORK

- ☐ Reach out to solicitors, independent financial advisers and will writers.
- ☐ Explore cross-referrals with trusted legal contacts.
- ☐ Host joint seminars or webinars on wealth planning.

USE AI (SAFELY AND WHERE APPROPRIATE) TO:

- ☐ Conduct competitor research.
- ☐ Analyse data.
- ☐ Draft first versions of blog posts, then human-edit for tone and compliance.
- ☐ Suggest keywords for your webpage.

Always prioritise the security and confidentiality of your clients' information.



TRACK AND IMPROVE

- ☐ Monitor enquiries and referrals monthly.
- ☐ Review marketing results at month three and twelve.
- ☐ Adjust messaging based on what resonates most.



ICAEW's regulation and conduct role

Our role is to help ICAEW members and firms to maintain high professional standards and hold them to those standards. We act in the public interest to strengthen trust in ICAEW members and firms by raising standards through a programme of continuous improvement.

ICAEW's regulation and conduct roles are separated from ICAEW's other activities through internal governance so as to ensure the independence of all regulatory and disciplinary decisions. These roles are carried out by the Professional Standards Department and overseen by the ICAEW Regulatory Board and oversight regulators including the Financial Reporting Council, the Insolvency Service, the Office for Professional Body Anti-Money Laundering Supervision and the Legal Services Board.

We:

- **authorise** only those firms and individuals with the appropriate expertise and experience to undertake accountancy services regulated by law such as statutory audit, local audit, insolvency, investment business advice and legal services such as probate;
- **support** professional standards in general accountancy practice through our Practice Assurance scheme;
- **provide** robust anti-money laundering supervision and monitoring;
- **monitor** registered firms and individuals to ensure they operate in accordance with laws, regulations and expected professional standards;
- **investigate** complaints and hold ICAEW Chartered Accountants and students, ICAEW-supervised firms and regulated and affiliated individuals to account where they fall short of the required standards;
- **respond** and comment on proposed changes to the law and regulation; and
- **provide** educational resources and materials to help ICAEW members and firms comply with laws and regulations and maintain high professional standards.

Chartered accountants are talented, ethical and committed professionals. ICAEW represents more than 211,600 members and students around the world. 81 of the top 100 global brands employ ICAEW Chartered Accountants.*

Founded in 1880, ICAEW has a long history of serving the public interest and we continue to work with governments, regulators and business leaders globally. And, as a world-leading improvement regulator, we supervise and monitor around 11,500 firms, holding them, and all ICAEW members and students, to the highest standards of professional competency and conduct.

* includes parent companies. Source: ICAEW member data March 2026, Interbrand,

Best Global Brands 2025

We promote inclusivity, diversity and fairness and we give talented professionals the skills and values they need to build resilient businesses, economies and societies, while ensuring our planet's resources are managed sustainably.

ICAEW is working towards becoming net zero, demonstrating our commitment to tackle climate change and supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goal 13.

ICAEW is a founding member of Chartered Accountants Worldwide (CAW), a global family that connects over 1.8m chartered accountants and students in more than 190 countries. Together, we support, develop and promote the role of chartered accountants as trusted business leaders, difference makers and advisers.

We believe that chartered accountancy can be a force for positive change. By sharing our insight, expertise and understanding we can help to create sustainable economies and a better future for all.

www.charteredaccountantsworldwide.com
www.globalaccountingalliance.com

ICAEW

Professional Standards Department
Metropolitan House
321 Avebury Boulevard
Milton Keynes
MK9 2FZ, UK

T +44 (0)1908 248 250
E contactus@icaew.com
icaew.com/probate



ICAEW is working towards becoming net zero