



Title
Research

Specialist support for estate administration



Mitigating risk with Title Research

Your helpful instruction guide



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Experience and expertise

Title Research has been carrying out genealogy, people tracing and asset repatriation work for over 50 years. Our research methodologies have developed over this time and are accepted by all major insurers for the purpose of obtaining missing beneficiary insurance.

Our experience with dealing with overseas assets means we can efficiently deal with the multitude of forms and other paperwork required to successfully resolve these challenges.

Key technical contacts



Simon Barber, Technical Manager.

Simon joined Title Research in 2002 as a Case Manager responsible for managing a caseload of genealogy and missing beneficiary cases. Following a spell directly leading the delivery team as Operations Manager, he moved into the Technical Manager role and now has responsibility for leading on the quality and service delivery of all of Title Research's genealogy and overseas asset services.



Stephanie Hubert, Team Manager.

Stephanie joined Title Research in April 2013 and initially managed a caseload of various specialist support cases for our solicitor clients. Stephanie also developed an interest in, and grew the business' expertise of genealogy in Ireland. Since 2016 Stephanie has led part of our service delivery team and is responsible for ensuring that we deliver excellent client service whilst completing projects as quickly and efficiently as possible.



Emily Page, Technical Estate Coordinator.

Emily joined Title Research in July 2017 having previously worked at Computershare. Emily's ability to spot and implement process improvement ensured her move into a Technical Estate Coordinator role. Emily now takes full ownership of the technical work behind large estates spanning multiple jurisdictions and assets.



In the last three years Title Research have worked on over 5,000 estates

Whether by locating missing beneficiaries, reconstructing family trees to prove entitlement or dealing with assets in the UK or overseas.

Much more of our work now is focussed in overseas jurisdictions as people are much more mobile than they used to be. Of the 10,000 missing heirs we located in the last three years, 2,000 resided overseas and indeed we have worked in some capacity from Portugal to Russia and everywhere in between. In fact, we estimate we have worked in over 25% of the world to date.

As well as assisting with UK based assets, we have extensive experience dealing with assets in overseas jurisdictions.

On the rare occasions your matter exceeds our expertise and influence, we will always work with you to find an alternative solution.

We have particular expertise in dealing with North American assets in regard to the transfer or sale of shareholdings; advising on and assisting with associated tax implications for assets that exceed US tax thresholds; assisting with escheated holdings and the closure of bank accounts in numerous different States.

As well as North America, we are well versed in providing solutions for shareholdings held in other jurisdictions, such as Hong Kong, Malaysia, Jersey & Guernsey, Isle of Man, South Africa, Malaysia, Thailand and more.

Keeping you up to date

Once you instruct us to work on your behalf, the matter will be handed to one of our Personal Estate Managers (PEMs). Their role is to guide the matter through to completion – providing direction to the technical teams and keeping you up to date as things progress.

We will update you on a schedule that works for you, but if something happens that requires your input, or a potential problem surfaces we will let you know straightaway.



Lauren Boyce, Personal Estate Manager.

Lauren joined Title Research in February 2018 and has managed a variety of genealogy cases. Following the completion of her first year she is now mainly responsible for managing intestacies, Statutory Wills, Administrator searches and assisting our clients with arranging insurance.



Holly Dawe, Personal Estate Manager.

Holly joined Title Research in March 2018 as a Personal Estate Manager, having joined us from a background in Trusts and Insurance. Holly is responsible for a full caseload of estates including all client contact and managing and directing the technical work required. Within her role, Holly's priority is to keep her clients informed of progress, and to ensure an efficient turnaround.



Kate Sunderland, Personal Estate Manager.

Kate joined Title Research in June 2018 working on completing share related tasks for estate administration cases. Following the completion of her first year, Kate took on the role of Personal Estate Manager. She now manages a full caseload of estates, keeping her clients up to date with progress and providing excellent customer service.

Regulation

Probate genealogy isn't independently regulated in the UK which means those seeking to outsource elements of the estate administration process must look for other credentials as part of the due diligence process and to ensure that any risk is mitigated on behalf of Personal Representatives.

Title Research maintains the highest ethical standards and we are completely transparent about our services. Our commercial data handling statement can be found on our website. Furthermore, Title Research is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) specifically in regard to advising on Missing Beneficiary Indemnity Insurance.



Pricing

There is guidance set out by STEP in relation to genealogy fees, entitled “Personal Representatives and Trustees – Genealogists fees”, which is located here: www.step.org/personal-representatives-and-trustees-genealogists-fees.

This STEP briefing guide is designed to outline the primary methods of charging adopted by genealogy firms and the issues to consider.

Fixed fees

At Title Research we provide a fixed fee option wherever possible and suitable as we believe it offers the most transparency from the outset and provides total clarity on the cost of resolving a matter in its entirety.

We have been helping resolve complex estate administration cases for over 50 years and have the experience and expertise to accurately assess the complexity of a matter and determine a fixed price accordingly.

When dealing with assets, either in the UK or overseas, fixed fees also offer the same level of clarity and are highly suitable as the matters we resolve are often transactional in nature.

Time and expenses

Whilst many matters can be resolved on a fixed fee basis, sometimes there is not sufficient information to hand from the outset in order to accurately quote for the work involved. A common example is an intestate estate where there is very limited information available regarding the scope of the family.

In such instances we would recommend working on a time and expenses or budget basis. Our experienced team would make an initial assessment and agree a working budget in advance based on hours spent researching. It's possible that research can be concluded within or below that budget, equally it is possible that the budget may be exceeded if research can't be concluded.

In these situations, we may need to charge on a time and expense basis purely because the timeframes involved will be much longer and highly unpredictable. However, we will always advise of this and update you at every stage of research to ensure that you are receiving the best possible value and service.

When working on a time and expenses basis, our hourly fees are calculated on an overall average of £155 per hour. More specifically, hourly fees are determined by the level of experience and seniority that a particular researcher has.

In practical application on any given matter, we would instruct our most experienced and senior researchers on the more complex aspects and utilise research assistants for less complex tasks; overall this ensures that cost is contained without comprising quality.



Contingency fees

Title Research are one of the few companies in this sector that do not charge on a contingency/commission basis and we have been openly opposed to it for many years. It is an arrangement whereby a genealogist agrees a percentage of a beneficiaries' entitlement, acting as a "finders' fee".

Contingency fees can vary between 10-30% (plus VAT), although we have seen higher. We believe that the cost to locate a legatee bears no relation to the size of legacy and under a contingency agreement, this cost can often be vastly disproportionate to the work involved.

Consider the fee for a legatee due £10,000 and a legatee due £100,000 under a contingency arrangement – at Title Research we charge a fixed fee of £399 plus VAT and disbursements to locate a missing heir in the UK.

It is important to remember that Personal Representatives have fiduciary duties to act in the best interest of the estate and its beneficiaries and to maximise its value where possible. Contingency arrangements and their cost to the estate should be given careful consideration in regard to value for money.



How to best advise your client

Outsourcing the specialist aspects of estate administration will speed up the process and allow distribution sooner.

Providers of specialist services – such as Title Research – have specialist knowledge that can make the task or project they have been engaged to help with progress more smoothly and quickly than if you were to carry out the work yourself. For example, we deal with North American shareholdings on a daily basis so we are aware of all the potential pitfalls that can catch people out. Most of our clients do not see these problems as frequently. When we are reconstructing a family tree, we know what to look out for and can navigate the ever increasing complexities in family make up to ensure that all the entitled beneficiaries are accounted for.

In an unregulated industry, look to other accreditations.

There are a wide range of different providers for specialist services available to choose from. Your client could make a decision based solely on price, but in an unregulated industry such as for genealogy and people tracing, looking for other independent accreditations can be very helpful. For example, what arrangements do they have if they need to engage a third party outside of the UK? Do they hold professional indemnity insurance? These are all points to consider that may affect the advice you give to your client.

How transparent is the provider's pricing - will it offer good value for the work involved and help maximise the estate for beneficiaries?

Finally, it is worth considering the transparency of the price you are being quoted. If it is a fixed price for a piece of work then check what is and is not included within this. For example, is the use of databases included or is this charged as an additional disbursement? If a time and expense quotation is provided then ask what the hourly rate being used is likely to be. Title Research applies various hourly rates depending on the experience level of the person undertaking the work – much as we're sure you do within your firm – but can inform you of the average rate used.

Contingency or commission fees can seem attractive to lay people, as it is often presented in a way that suggests that it doesn't cost the estate anything. However, you may wish to advise your client of the STEP guidelines published on this subject which urge caution. It is also worth calculating the approximate fee

that would be paid using a percentage fee and comparing that to an hourly rate or fixed price quotation.

Turn to Title Research

Our proven expertise can help you
with any estate administration challenge,
at home or overseas.

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