

The following Frequently Asked Questions may be helpful if we have contacted you or if you are simply seeking general information. Please contact us directly if there is anything else you would like to know.

Why have you contacted me?

We contact people because, as a result of our research, we believe that they may be entitled to inherit from the estate of a deceased relative who died without leaving a Will; or, we may write simply with a family enquiry, to try to establish if we are on the right lines.

Are there other reasons?

Yes. We regularly act for solicitors and executors who are trying to find beneficiaries who have been named in a Will. We act for insurance companies and banks in a similar way, and many other authorities, both in the UK and abroad.

Are you acting on instructions in my particular case?

If we are, we will have made that clear when we contacted you. On the other hand, if we have located you as a result of our own initiative, we will also have made that clear.

Do you ever pretend to be acting with authorisation when you don't have it?

Definitely not! There are probate genealogists and tracing firms who will give the impression that they are solicitors or they are acting for the government or the probate registry, or that they have been specifically appointed to handle a matter. They may claim that they are in charge of a case, or have a TV contract. All such claims need to be taken with a pinch of salt and reported to the appropriate authorities. Anglia Research is always very open and clear about its position and never makes any misrepresentation.

What is probate genealogy? How does it work?

If somebody dies intestate (without leaving a Will), and if no relatives are known, their assets will eventually pass to the Crown. The authorities make very little attempt to locate relatives, other than to place small advertisements with minimal information in the media. Therefore, there is every likelihood that rightful beneficiaries will never know about their entitlement, but for the speculative involvement of a Probate Genealogist.

Probate Genealogists seek out the relevant advertisements and, acting on their own initiative, try to identify and locate the relatives who are entitled to inherit from the intestacy.

Is it also called heir-hunting?

Yes, as a result of recent TV publicity, our profession of probate genealogy has become more familiarly known as heir-hunting.

So am I likely to appear on TV against my wishes?

Perhaps, but not with Anglia Research! Despite numerous approaches, Anglia Research always declines to take part in TV programmes. Client confidentiality (not to mention the Data Protection Act) is far more important to us than cheap publicity. Our clients need to be reassured that their private family affairs and financial matters stay private.

How do I know that this is a genuine matter?

We at Anglia Research understand that the people who we contact might be concerned and apprehensive. They needn't be. We are registered with, and therefore regulated by, the Financial Services Authority. Our founder and many of our researchers are members of AGRA. Our company registration is 5405509 and can be found at Companies House.

Are there other credentials?

Not really. There are any number of organisations that anyone can join simply by paying a fee, but the genuine ones are FSA, AGRA, and Companies House registration.

There must be an error somewhere. No-one in my family ever had a penny to their name.

We often hear this! But we might be talking about quite a distant relationship, e.g. a half-blood cousin four times removed. Hardly anyone knows all their relatives to that extent.

How have you contacted me? Are my details safe?

We use information in the public domain which is available to anyone, which includes a combination of birth, marriage and death indexes, census data and electoral roll records. We also have our own collections of material which have accumulated during the company's five decades of operation.

You can be rest assured that your details will never be passed onto a third party without your permission and that they will only ever be used in the context of the research we are conducting.

Might I be contacted by more than one company?

This sometimes happens. The probate genealogy industry is highly competitive and no particular company is appointed to deal with intestate estates.

In that case, do all of the potential beneficiaries have to sign up with the same company?

No. Should a number of beneficiaries sign with different companies it has no affect upon their entitlement other than the fee involved. However, it will always be in your best interest to sign an Agreement with Anglia Research, whose service and attention to detail is without equal. Do be aware that many amateurs have entered the industry recently, and their inexperience can cause problems and delays at the administration stage.

How do I know that the fee stated in your Agreement is the only fee I will pay? Are there any hidden costs?

The fees set out in the Agreement are the only fees Anglia Research will ever ask you to pay. There are no hidden costs and Anglia Research will never ask you to pay any money from your own pocket. This is our guarantee to you.

Your fee seems reasonable. How is it decided?

We take into account the value of the assets (if known), the complexity of the case, the number of relatives, and many other aspects. We avoid London rents and salaries so that our overheads can be

kept low, thus ensuring that you receive a high share of your entitlement.

You haven't told me the name of the deceased. Why?

At our own expense, we will have speculatively invested time, effort, and money, into establishing your connection to the deceased person and the unclaimed assets. We propose to pass on this information to you in return for a fee Agreement. We would love to give you the information first, but we need to secure our fee by having a signed Agreement in place before we can disclose details.

Can I visit your offices to discuss the matter?

Of course! Please contact the Case Manager or call Head Office to arrange a visit.

I have signed your agreement, what happens next?

Once we have agreements back from entitled kin, we submit a claim to the authorities on behalf of one representative family member. When the claim has been admitted, it is normal for the same relative to become the PR (Personal Representative - the equivalent of Executor or Trustee). A solicitor is then chosen to work with the PR and deal with the administration of the estate. They undertake the work of gathering in the estate's assets and paying out its liabilities. Only when this is done can the solicitor calculate how much each beneficiary is due and then make a distribution.

What about the solicitor's costs?

They are paid out of the estate's assets before distribution.

Are all solicitor's costs and services equal?

Far from it! Some research firms direct their clients to expensive solicitors and, to help justify high costs, they produce complicated accounts and create unnecessarily complex family trees, all meant to impress. Others, especially newcomers, will use inexperienced solicitors who end up floundering if the case takes an unexpected turn. In contrast, Anglia Research ensures that paperwork is kept simple and easily understood. For estate administration, we can offer an in-house very experienced facility at low cost, or refer to a panel of good-value experienced solicitors.

How long is the process likely to take?

Every case is different, so it is impossible to give a detailed time-line of how long the process takes, although most cases are managed within 6-9 months. There are always exceptions to this rule, however.

How much am I entitled to?

In many cases we are often unaware of the full value of the estate we are researching. Therefore, it is not always possible to estimate individual entitlements until our research is complete and all entitled kin have been located, and the claim has been accepted by the authorities.

What if I am not entitled after all, or the claim is not successful? Will I still have to pay you?

Absolutely not. Our fee is conditional upon you receiving something from the estate. There is no catch – you will never be asked to contribute.

Is it possible for your fees to exceed what I receive from the estate?

As our fee is based upon a percentage or proportion of what you are due from the estate, it is not possible for our fees to exceed your entitlement. To repeat – there is no catch.

How do you get paid?

Our fee is paid by the administrator at the point of distribution so we do not get paid until you receive your inheritance.

What happens to personal possessions of the deceased?

Sadly, in the vast majority of cases, the personal possessions of the deceased will either have been sold off to form a part of the monetary value of the estate or are disposed of. However, in a minority of cases, we are given old photographs, address books, etc, that can be passed on to the wider family.

I'm very interested in my family history. Can I get a copy of your research?

Certainly. Should you require a copy of the family tree, please speak to the Case Manager.

I'm very interested in establishing contact with long lost/unknown relatives. Can you give me their details?

Anglia Research is compliant with the Data Protection Act. This means that we can't and won't pass anybody's details to a third party without their consent. However, we can ask for permission to pass on details on your behalf. We also offer a free letter-forwarding service for this purpose.