

The background of the entire page is a close-up photograph of a wood grain, showing concentric growth rings in various shades of brown, from light tan to deep, dark chocolate and near-black tones. The grain is curved and organic in shape.

Independent Administration Services

Why Birketts?

Birketts is a full service, UK Top 50 law firm. With a rich history of over 160 years, we have built a reputation for delivering high-quality, client-focused legal advice. We understand the unique needs and challenges faced by our clients and we are dedicated to offering tailored solutions that meet their specific requirements, providing next level legal advice.

We advise businesses, government and public sector organisations and individuals in the UK and internationally across four principal practice groups: private client, real estate, corporate services and dispute resolution. We are defined by our next level law proposition. We work with our clients as a proactive partner, horizon scanning and thinking ahead to the changes, challenges or opportunities that they may face.

We are specifically renowned for the strength of our private wealth practice, exhibiting a broad expertise in succession planning, often acting for farmers and landed estate owners, family investment companies and business owners. We pride ourselves on our long-standing tradition of excellence and our commitment to providing top-tier legal services. We have a strong team, with a wealth of experience in acting for many of the largest businesses, farming families and entrepreneurs.

Our next level law approach is also applied to our people. Our collegiate culture means everyone is encouraged to achieve their next level in everything they do. Our lawyers provide highly professional and level-headed advice on probate, inheritance tax, succession planning and much more.

With our ambition to succeed also comes a strong desire to make a positive contribution to the communities we serve and we are committed to delivering the objectives set out in our ESG strategy. Diversity plays an integral part in all that we do, with female partners comprising 42% of our partnership.

Accreditations & Awards

- ★ UK Top 50 Law Firm
- ★ ‘Customer Delight’ award
Gatwick Diamond Business Awards 2025
- ★ ‘Equality, Diversity and Inclusion’ award
Norfolk & Norwich Law Society Excellence Awards 2024
- ★ Included in the Inspiring Workplaces
Top 50 at the Inspiring Workplaces Awards 2024

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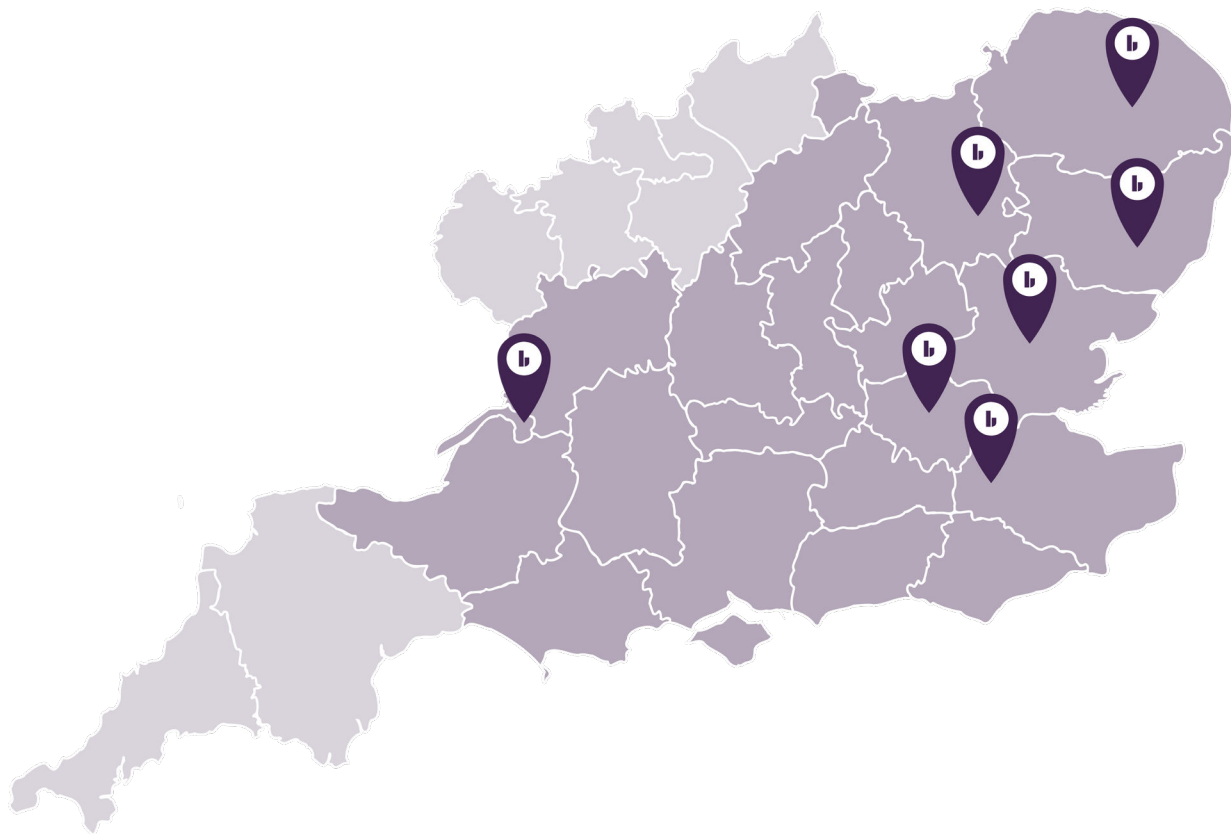
A really strong team, full of very capable and approachable people.
Great strength in depth.

Legal 500 [UK 2025]

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Birketts at a glance

We are a full service, UK top 50 law firm with a heritage spanning 160 years. We have more than 1100 people based in seven offices across the UK



1100+

People

700+

Lawyers and Legal professionals*

140+

Partners

42%

Female Partnership

£120m

Revenue (2024/2025)

#42

UK Law.com

Our Independent Administration Service

What is an independent administrator?

An independent administrator is a person or trust corporation appointed to manage the administration of an estate, usually by order of the court.

What are the advantages of appointing an independent administrator?

- Independent administrators are experienced professionals who can efficiently handle estate administrations including inheritance tax filings and navigating the UK probate system, ensuring quicker estate processing and faster distribution to beneficiaries.
- An independent administrator has no personal interest in the estate and must act without conflicts of interest, ensuring the estate is administered according to the testator's wishes and for the benefit of all beneficiaries
- Appointing an independent administrator can significantly reduce stress and tension for beneficiaries, especially during a time of loss, by ensuring professional handling of the estate administration and minimising conflicts among beneficiaries.
- Independent administrators are often appointed after estate disputes and can efficiently resolve lingering issues in-house, especially if supported by a dedicated, specialist disputes team like Birketts' Private Wealth Disputes Team, saving time and money.

When should you appoint an independent administrator?

There are some circumstances where it is advised that you appoint an independent administrator, these include:

- When there is a dispute.
- When an executor is unable to act
- When it is inappropriate for an executor to act
- When an estate is complex
- When there is a conflict between appointed executors
- When an estate is being administered poorly.

“

Lorna Spear is very easy to talk to and listens to my concerns. She is extremely knowledgeable and suggests things that are relevant for me. She is efficient and professional.

Legal 500 [UK 2025] ”

“

Bernadette Baker is one of the leading partners in this area, certainly outside London. She is fantastic with clients and lovely to work with.

Legal 500 [UK 2025] ”

How can Birketts help?

Our Private Client Team comprises of more than 100 lawyers who each deal with administering estates, either as the named executor in a will or by instruction from the executors, on a daily basis.

Birketts Trust Corporation

Birketts can either take on the role of independent administrator by the appointment of partners personally or through the appointment of the Birketts Trust Corporation (BTC). BTC, incorporated on 18 February 2023, is run by the partners and legal directors at Birketts across our Private Client Team who have a wealth of experience in acting as independent administrators; this allows for the most appropriate individual and team to be chosen for the case at hand. We will take into account location, facts and your preferences when assigning a case handler to deal with the estate administration.

Recent experience

Birketts' Lorna Spear regularly acts as a court appointed independent administrator and is frequently appointed as an executor by will.

Lorna was appointed as independent administrator by the High Court in the case of Lane v Lane [2024] EWHC 275 (Ch).

Other recent experiences include:

- Bernadette Baker was recently appointed as independent administrator by the High Court in relation to an intestate estate.
- Taking over the administration of an estate of a deceased landed estate from a firm that were being investigated by the SRA for malpractice.
- Acting as an executor alongside family members where a conflict of interest arose for one of the executors who was also a beneficiary.
- BTC has been appointed by the court as independent administrator on a number of estate where disputed issues have arisen.

Accreditations

Birketts is recognised nationally for its leading private client practice.

★ Chambers High Net Worth
Band 1

★ Chambers [UK 2024]
Ranked

★ eprivateclient
Top Law Firms 2024

★ Legal 500 [UK 2025]
Top Tier Firm

★ Society of Trust and
Estate Practitioners
Gold Employer Partner

★ Contentious Wills & Probate Team of
the Year - Large (shortlisted)
British Wills & Probate Awards 2025

Fees and billing

As no two estates are the same, it is difficult to estimate the fees involved with acting as an independent administrator. We therefore charge on a time-spent basis relative to lawyers' hourly rates. Please see our hourly rates below:

- **Partners** - £400-£460 plus VAT
- **Legal Directors** - £340-£350 plus VAT
- **Senior Associates** - £320-£330 plus VAT
- **Associates** - £250-£260 plus VAT
- **Solicitors** - £200-£230 plus VAT
- **Paralegal** - £160 plus VAT
- **Trainee Solicitors** - £140-£160 plus VAT

Please note that these hourly rates relate to our Private Client Advisory and Private Wealth Disputes teams only; further information about other teams' hourly rates can be provided on request

The amount of time spent working on an estate will be relative to its complexity. We typically advise that our fees are likely to be in the region of 1-3% of the gross value of the estate. This percentage is typically lower for larger estates.

Please rest assured that we strive to allocate all work at the appropriate level to ensure that costs are kept to a minimum. As part of our commitment to transparency, whenever we issue a bill, the beneficiaries will receive a detailed breakdown of the time recorded.

Further support

As a full-service law firm, we have access to a range of professionals across multiple legal practice areas that can support on appropriate cases.

Private Wealth Disputes

Our specialist Private Wealth Disputes Team are experts at resolving all kinds of private wealth disputes. The team has a significant breadth of experience and can assist with all issues connected with estates, Wills, trusts and probate.

Agriculture

Our agricultural lawyers provide a full-service approach and can advise on all aspects of your business from tenancies, business structures and planning to employment, diversification and Natural Capital. We can also help organise your private matters including Wills, tax planning and succession. We act for farmers, landowners and agri-business specialists to maximise and protect estates, assets and businesses.

Corporate

Our expertise includes advising buyers and sellers (both individuals and companies) on the full range of transactions from trade sales/purchases, institutional sales/purchases, management buyouts and employee ownership trust sales to financial distress transactions.

Court of Protection

Our advice covers general deputyship administration and reports, property and affairs deputyship applications, personal welfare deputyship applications, statutory Will applications, gift applications, contested applications, NHS continuing healthcare funding applications and appeals and replacement trustee applications.

International Private Client

Our International Private Client Team are highly skilled in providing advice on the complexities of English law and UK tax as well as experience dealing with matters across multiple jurisdictions. We are here to help families administer the estate of a person with international links, covering all issues relating to probate, including realising assets in different jurisdictions and associated tax issues.

Other

Birketts also has many other teams whose professional services are regularly used when acting as an independent administrator including our Family, International Family, Residential Property, Commercial Property and Property Litigation teams.

Key contacts



Lorna Spear

Partner

+44 1603 756491

lorna-spear@birketts.co.uk

- Lorna acts for a wide range of clients including business owners, entrepreneurs and landowners in relation to wills, tax planning and probate matters.
- Lorna also acts for trustees and beneficiaries, advising on all aspects of trust law and the creation, management and restructuring of family trusts.
- Lorna has a particular interest in disputed probate and trust matters and undertakes administrator and trustee appointments.



Bernadette Baker

Partner

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- Bernadette advises individuals, trustees and fiduciaries on complex trust disputes and claims involving protectors. Bernadette also specialises in domestic and international succession disputes including challenges based on capacity, undue influence, fraud and forgery together with claims under the Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependants) Act 1975 and proprietary estoppel disputes.
- Bernadette is able to take on the role of independent administrator working closely with our Private Client Advisory Team and our Tax and Trusts Team.
- Bernadette advises on professional negligence claims arising out of succession disputes.
- Bernadette is a recognised leader in her field with a proven track record of resolving complex disputes with compassion and sensitivity.



Helen Cordingley

Partner

+44 1603 542694

helen-cordingley@birketts.co.uk

- Helen specialises in a wide range of Private Client work including tax and succession planning for high-net-worth clients, complex estate administrations including Deeds of Variation where appropriate, the creation and administration of Trusts, Wills and Powers of Attorney.
- Helen also has experience of being Court appointed independent Personal Representative in contentious probate matters, working alongside our Private Wealth Disputes team.



Kate Harris

Partner

+44 1223 643106

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- Kate is a full member of ACTAPS (the Association of Contentious Trust and Probate Specialists) and has extensive experience advising private individuals, trustees, executors, administrators and beneficiaries in relation to a broad range of inheritance, estate and trust disputes including Will validity claims, estate administration issues, claims under the Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependants) Act 1975 and breach of trust claims.



Caroline Alexander

Partner

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- Caroline acts for a wide range of UK-based and international clients and families, with a particular focus on the administration of high net worth and complex estates, often involving foreign assets (including grant re-seals and double taxation relief claims) and estates with contentious elements.
- Her expertise includes advising extensively on Agricultural Property Relief (APR) and Business Property Relief (BPR) for large landed estates. Caroline regularly engages with HMRC and the District Valuer's Office on all aspects of inheritance tax, including valuations, surplus income gifting and estates with trust structures.



Paul Thompson

Partner

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- Much of Paul's practice is based on estate and succession planning, trusts and capital taxes, with a particular focus on mitigating tax and protecting assets.
- Paul has a loyal and long-standing set of clients, often spanning several generations; they appreciate his clear and creative advice, his technical nous and his speedy and personable approach.
- Based primarily in the Birketts London office but also maintaining a strong East Midlands practice, Paul routinely advises on inheritance tax, wills, probate, trusts, partnerships and powers of attorney. Paul works closely with accountants, wealth advisers and land agents.

+44 8081 694320

birketts.co.uk

Birketts LLP is a limited liability partnership authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority and registered in England & Wales with registered number OC317545.

A list of members may be inspected at any of our offices. The term 'Partner' is used to refer to a member of Birketts LLP.

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