# Lester Aldridge partner slams new “stealth tax” on estates


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Kurt Lee, Partner and Head of Private Client at Dorset’s leading law firm, Lester Aldridge, has slammed the Government’s announcement of changes to probate fees as a new “stealth tax” on estates.

At the moment, the probate fee is fixed at £155 where solicitors apply and £215 for personal applications. This is the same fee for all estates no matter what the value. The work done by the Probate Registry to issue a grant is also largely the same for every estate.

Under the new proposals, the current threshold for fee exemption of £5,000 will be raised to £50,000. For higher value estates, the fees paid will be banded according to the value of the estate and will range from £250 to £6,000 for estate over £2m. These fees are however a reduction from fee proposals announced last year, when they suggested fees of up to £20,000.

These fees have to be paid before the grant is issued which could cause difficulty for the family and the deceased’s personal representatives who will need to find the money to pay the probate fee as well as funding initial funeral costs and inheritance tax.

Kurt Lee said: “These increases are nothing but an additional tax on death designed to plug the huge funding gap now facing the Court system caused by previous Government cuts. It is unacceptable for a Government to impose a new tax, dressed up as a Court fee, without proper scrutiny from Parliament.

“These fees will present further difficulties for people trying to deal with the estate of their loved one at what is always a difficult time. It could mean paying more in fees out of their own pocket before they have the ability to access the deceased’s funds for reimbursement, unless the bank agrees to make payment directly.”






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