

## **STANDARD TERMS OF BUSINESS**

**Version 14 – 26 June 2024**

The following terms of business apply to all engagements accepted by Villars Hayward LLP. All work is carried out under these terms except where changes are expressly agreed in writing.

### **Applicable law**

Our engagement letter, the schedules of services and our standard terms and conditions of business are governed by and should be construed in accordance with English law. Each party agrees that the courts of England will have exclusive jurisdiction in relation to any claim, dispute or difference concerning this engagement letter and any matter arising from it on any basis. Each party irrevocably waives any right to object to any action being brought in those Courts, to claim that the action has been brought in an inappropriate forum, or to claim that those Courts do not have jurisdiction.

We will not accept responsibility if you act on advice previously given by us without first confirming with us that the advice is still valid in light of any change in the law or in your circumstances. We will accept no liability for losses arising from changes in the law, or the interpretation thereof, that occur after the date on which the advice is given.

### **Client identification**

As with other professional services firms, we are required to identify our clients for the purposes of the UK anti-money laundering legislation. We may request from you, and retain, such information and documentation as we require for these purposes and/or make searches of appropriate databases. If we are not able to obtain satisfactory evidence of your identity, we will not be able to proceed with the engagement.

If you undertake business that requires you to be supervised by an appropriate supervisory authority to follow anti-money laundering regulations including if you accept or make a high value cash payment of £10,000 or more (or equivalent in any currency) in exchange for goods you should inform us.

Any personal data received from you to comply with our obligations under The Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer for Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2017 (MLR 2017) will be processed only for the purposes of preventing money laundering or terrorist financing. No other use will be made of this personal data unless use of the data is permitted by or under enactment other than the MLR 2017, or we have obtained the consent of the data subject to the proposed use of the data.

### **Client money**

We may, from time to time, hold money on your behalf. The money will be held in trust in a client bank account, which is segregated from the firm's funds. The account will be operated, and all funds dealt with, in accordance with the Clients' Money Regulations of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

All client monies will be held in an interest-bearing account. To avoid excessive administration, interest will only be paid to you where the amount earned on the balances held on your behalf in any calendar year exceeds £25.00. If the total sum of money held on your behalf is enough to give rise to a significant amount of interest or is likely to do so, then we will put the money in a designated interest-bearing client bank account and pay the interest to you. Subject to any tax legislation, interest will be paid gross.

We will return monies held on your behalf promptly as soon as there is no longer any reason to retain those funds. If any funds remain in our client account that are unclaimed and the client to which they relate has remained untraced for five years or we as a firm cease to practise, then we may pay those monies to a registered charity.

### **Commissions or other benefits**

In some circumstances we may receive commissions or other benefits for introductions to other professionals or in respect of transactions which we arrange for you. Where this happens, we will notify you in writing of the amount and terms of payment and receipt of any such commissions or benefits. The fees you would otherwise pay will be reduced by the amount of the commissions or benefits.

### **Compensation arrangements**

In the unlikely event that we cannot meet our liabilities to you, you may be able to seek a grant from the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales' compensation scheme. Generally, applications for a grant must be made to ICAEW within twelve months or the time you become aware, or reasonably ought to have been aware of the loss. Further information about the scheme and the circumstances in which grants may be made is available on ICAEW's website: [www.icaew.com/probate](http://www.icaew.com/probate)

### **Complaints**

If you would like to talk to us about how we can improve our service to you, or if you are unhappy with the service you are receiving, please let us know by contacting Janice Hayward. We will consider carefully any complaint that you may make about our services as soon as we receive it and will do all we can to resolve the issue. We will acknowledge your complaint within five business days of its receipt and will endeavour to deal with it within eight weeks. Any complaint should be submitted to us by letter. If we do not deal with it in this timescale or you are unhappy with our response you may of course take the matter up with our professional body the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales and the Legal Ombudsman if it relates to Probate. Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman should be made within six years of the act of omission or within three years of you becoming aware of the issue and in either case within six months of our written response to your complaint to us.

The contact details for the Legal Ombudsman are:

Legal Ombudsman, PO Box 15870, Birmingham B30 9EB

Email – [enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)

### **Confidentiality**

Unless we are authorised by you to disclose information on your behalf, we confirm that where you give us confidential information we shall at all times during and after this engagement keep it confidential, except as required by law, by our insurers or as provided for in regulatory, ethical, or other professional pronouncements or as part of an external peer review applicable to us or our engagement. This undertaking will apply during and after this engagement.

You agree that, if we act for other clients who are or who become your competitors, to comply with our duty of confidentiality it will be sufficient for us to take such steps as we think appropriate to preserve the confidentiality of information given to us by you, both during and after this engagement. These may include taking the same or similar steps as we take in respect of the confidentiality of our own information.

In addition, if we act for other clients whose interests are or may be adverse to yours, we will manage the conflict by implementing additional safeguards to preserve confidentiality. Safeguards may include measures such as separate teams, physical separation of teams, and separate arrangements for storage of and access to information.

You agree that the effective implementation of such steps or safeguards as described above will provide adequate measures to avoid any real risk of confidentiality being impaired.

We may, on occasions, subcontract work on your affairs to other tax or accounting professionals. The subcontractors will be bound by our client confidentiality terms.

We reserve the right, for the purpose of promotional activity, training or for other business purpose, to mention that you are a client. As stated above we will not disclose any confidential information.

#### **Conflicts of interest**

We will inform you if we become aware of any conflict of interest in our relationship with you or in our relationship with you and another client unless we are unable to do so because of our confidentiality obligations. We have safeguards that can be implemented to protect the interests of different clients if a conflict arises. Where conflicts are identified which cannot be managed in a way that protects your interests then we regret that we will be unable to provide further services.

If there is a conflict of interest that is capable of being addressed successfully by the adoption of suitable safeguards to protect your interests, then we will adopt those safeguards. You agree that we reserve the right to act during and after our engagement for other clients whose interests are or may be competing with or adverse to yours subject of course to our obligations of confidentiality and the safeguards set out in the paragraph on confidentiality above.

#### **Data protection**

To enable us to discharge the services agreed in this engagement letter, comply with related legal and regulatory obligations and for other related purposes including updating and enhancing client records and analysis for management purposes, as a data controller, we may obtain, use, process and disclose personal data about you as described in our privacy notice. We confirm when processing data on your behalf that we will comply with the provisions of all relevant data protection legislation and regulation.

You are also an independent controller responsible for complying with data protection legislation and regulation in respect of the personal data you process and, accordingly where you disclose personal data to us you confirm that such disclosure is fair and lawful and otherwise does not contravene relevant requirements. Nothing within this engagement letter relieves you as a data controller of your own direct responsibilities and liabilities under data protection legislation and regulation.

Data protection legislation and regulation places obligations on you as a data controller where we act as a data processor to undertake the processing of personal data on your behalf, for instance where we operate a payroll service for you. We therefore confirm that we will at all times take appropriate measures to comply with relevant requirements when processing data on your behalf. In particular we confirm that we have adequate security measures in place and that we will comply with any obligations equivalent to those placed on you as a data controller.

Our privacy notice, as set out in a separate appendix to these terms of business, explains how we process personal data in respect of the various services that we provide.

We shall answer your reasonable enquiries to enable you to monitor compliance with this clause.

### **Disengagement**

Should we resign or be requested to resign we will normally issue a disengagement letter to ensure that our respective responsibilities are clear. Should we have no contact with you for a period of one year or more we may issue to your last known address a disengagement letter and hence cease to act.

### **Electronic and other communication**

Unless you instruct us otherwise we may, where appropriate, communicate with you and with third parties via email or by other electronic means. The recipient is responsible for virus checking emails and any attachments.

With electronic communication there is a risk of non-receipt, delayed receipt, inadvertent misdirection or interception by third parties. We use virus-scanning software to reduce the risk of viruses and similar damaging items being transmitted through emails or electronic storage devices. However electronic communication is not totally secure and we cannot be held responsible for damage or loss caused by viruses nor for communications which are corrupted or altered after despatch. Nor can we accept any liability for problems or accidental errors relating to this means of communication especially in relation to commercially sensitive material. These are risks you must bear in return for greater efficiency and lower costs. If you do not wish to accept these risks please let us know and we will communicate by paper mail, other than where electronic submission is mandatory.

Any communication by us with you sent through the post is deemed to arrive at your postal address two working days after the day that the document was sent.

### **Fees and payment terms**

Our fees may depend not only upon the time spent on your affairs but also on the level of skill and responsibility and the importance and value of the advice that we provide, as well as the level of risk.

If we provide you with an estimate of our fees for any specific work, then the estimate will not be contractually binding unless we explicitly state that that will be the case. Otherwise our fees will be calculated on the basis of the hours worked by each member of staff necessarily engaged on your affairs multiplied by their charge-out rate per hour, VAT being charged thereon. Indicative hourly charges out rates are as follows:

|                |      |
|----------------|------|
| Partner        | £350 |
| Senior Manager | £250 |
| Senior         | £160 |
| Assistant      | £80  |

These rates are applicable to the financial year ended 31 March 2025 and are not expected to change during that period. If there is any amendment made to these rates, you will be notified accordingly.

Where requested we may indicate a fixed fee for the provision of specific services or an indicative range of fees for a particular assignment. It is not our practice to identify fixed fees for more than a year ahead as such fee quotes need to be reviewed in the light of events. If it becomes apparent to us, due to unforeseen circumstances, that a fee quote is inadequate, we reserve the right to notify you of a revised figure or range and to seek your agreement thereto.

In some cases, you may be entitled to assistance with your professional fees, particularly in relation to any investigation into your tax affairs by HMRC. Assistance may be provided through insurance policies you hold or via membership of a professional or trade body. Other than where such insurance was arranged through us you will need to advise us of any such insurance cover that you have. You will remain liable for our fees regardless of whether all or part are liable to be paid by your insurers.

Our invoices will be due for payment upon presentation. Our fees are exclusive of VAT which will be added where it is chargeable. Any disbursements we incur on your behalf and expenses incurred in the course of carrying out our work for you will be added to our invoices where appropriate.

Unless otherwise agreed to the contrary our fees do not include the costs of any third party, counsel or other professional fees. Should these costs be incurred to fulfil our engagement then such necessary additional charges may be payable by you.

We reserve the right to charge interest on late paid invoices at the rate of 3% above bank base rates under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998. We also reserve the right to suspend our services or to cease to act for you on giving written notice if payment of any fees is unduly delayed. We intend to exercise these rights only where it is fair and reasonable to do so.

If you do not accept that an invoiced fee is fair and reasonable you must notify us within 21 days of receipt, failing which you will be deemed to have accepted that payment is due.

If a client company, trust or other entity is unable or unwilling to settle our fees, we reserve the right to seek payment from the individual (or parent company) giving us instructions on behalf of the client, and we shall be entitled to enforce any sums due against the group company or individual nominated to act for you.

The directors personally guarantee to make good any outstanding fees or invoices raised by this firm.

### **Implementation**

We will only assist with implementation of our advice if specifically instructed and agreed in writing.

### **Intellectual property rights**

We will retain all copyright in any document prepared by us during the course of carrying out the engagement save where the law specifically provides otherwise.

You are not permitted to use our name in any statement or document you may issue unless our prior written consent has been obtained. The only exception to this restriction would be statements or documents that, in accordance with applicable law are to be made public.

### **Internal disputes within a client**

If we become aware of a dispute between the parties who own the business or who are in some way involved in its ownership and management, it should be noted that our client is the business and we would not provide information or services to one party without the express knowledge and permission of all parties. Unless otherwise agreed by all parties, we will continue to supply information to the registered office (or normal place of business) for the attention of the directors / partners / trustees. If conflicting advice, information or instructions are received from different directors / partners / trustees in the business, we will refer the matter back to the board of directors / the partnership and will take no action until the board / partnership has agreed the action to be taken.

**Interpretation**

If any provision of our engagement letter or terms of business is held to be void, then that provision will be deemed not to form part of this contract. In the event of any conflict between these terms of business and the engagement letter or appendices, the relevant provision in the engagement letter or schedules will take precedence.

**Investment advice (including insurance mediation services)**

Investment business is regulated by the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000. If during the provision of professional services to you, you need advice on investments (including insurances), we may have to refer you to someone who is authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority as we are not. However, as we are licensed by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, we may be able to provide certain investment services that are complementary to, or arise out of, the professional services we are providing to you. Such advice may include general advice on the types of investments available to you, and introductions to third parties for more specific advice which we are not authorised to give. In the unlikely event that we cannot meet our liabilities to you, you may be able to claim compensation under the Chartered Accountants' Compensation Scheme in respect of exempt regulated activities undertaken. Further information about the scheme and the circumstances in which grants may be made is available on the ICAEW's website: [www.icaew.com/cacs](http://www.icaew.com/cacs)

**Lien**

Insofar as we are permitted to so by law or professional guidelines, we reserve the right to exercise a lien over all funds, documents and records in our possession relating to all engagements for you until all outstanding fees and disbursements are paid in full.

**Limitation of third party rights**

The advice and information we provide to you as part of our service is for your sole use and not for any third party to whom you may communicate it unless we have expressly agreed in the engagement letter that a specified third party may rely on our work. We accept no responsibility to third parties, including any group company to whom the engagement letter is not addressed, for any advice, information or material produced as part of our work for you which you make available to them. A party to this agreement is the only person who has the right to enforce any of its terms and no rights or benefits are conferred on any third party under the Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999.

**Period of engagement and termination**

Unless otherwise agreed in our engagement letter, our work will begin when we receive implicit or explicit acceptance of that letter. Except as stated in that letter we will not be responsible for periods before that date.

Each of us may terminate our agreement by giving not less than 21 days' notice in writing to the other party except where you fail to cooperate with us or we have reason to believe that you have provided us [or HMRC] with misleading information, in which case we may terminate this agreement immediately. Termination will be without prejudice to any rights that may have accrued to either of us prior to termination.

We reserve the right to terminate the engagement between us with immediate effect in the event of: your insolvency, bankruptcy or other agreement being reached with creditors; an independence issue or change in the law which means we can no longer act; failure to pay our fees by the due dates; or either party being in breach of their obligations if this is not corrected within 30 days of being asked to do so.

In the event of termination of our contract, we will endeavour to agree with you the arrangements for the completion of work in progress at that time, unless we are required for legal or regulatory reasons to cease work immediately. In that event, we shall not be required to carry out further work and shall not be responsible or liable for any consequences arising from termination.

#### **Professional rules and statutory obligations**

We will observe and act in accordance with the bye-laws, regulations and code of ethics of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales and will accept instructions to act for you on this basis. In particular you give us the authority to correct errors made by HMRC where we become aware of them. We will not be liable for any loss, damage or cost arising from our compliance with statutory or regulatory obligations. You can see copies of these requirements in our offices. The requirements are also available on the internet at [www.icaew.com/en/members/regulations-standards-and-guidance](http://www.icaew.com/en/members/regulations-standards-and-guidance).

We confirm that we are statutory auditors eligible to conduct audits under the Companies Act 2006. When conducting audit work, we are required to comply with the Ethical and Accounting Standards issued by the FRC, which can be accessed online at [www.frc.org.uk/Our-Work/Codes-Standards/Audit-and-Assurance/Standards-and-guidance/Standards-and-guidance-for-auditors.aspx](http://www.frc.org.uk/Our-Work/Codes-Standards/Audit-and-Assurance/Standards-and-guidance/Standards-and-guidance-for-auditors.aspx). We are also required to comply with the Audit Regulations which can be accessed at [www.icaew.com/en/technical/audit-and-assurance/working-in-the-regulated-area-of-audit](http://www.icaew.com/en/technical/audit-and-assurance/working-in-the-regulated-area-of-audit)

We confirm that we are accredited for the reserved legal activity of non-contentious probate. When conducting probate work we are required to comply with the Probate Regulations which can be accessed on the internet at <http://www.icaew.com/en/members/regulations-standards-and-guidance/reserved-legal-services>.

#### **Quality control**

As part of our ongoing commitment to providing a quality service, our files are periodically reviewed by an independent regulatory or quality control body. These reviewers are highly experienced and professional people and, of course, are bound by the same rules for confidentiality as our principals and staff.

When dealing with HMRC on your behalf we are required to be honest and to take reasonable care to ensure that your returns are correct. To enable us to do this, you are required to be honest with us and to provide us with all necessary information in a timely manner. For more information about "Your Charter" for your dealings with HMRC, visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmrc-charter>. To the best of our abilities, we will ensure that MRC meet their side of the Charter in their dealings with you.

#### **Reliance on advice**

We will endeavour to record all advice on important matters in writing. Advice given orally is not intended to be relied upon unless confirmed in writing. Therefore, if we provide oral advice (for example during the course of a meeting or a telephone conversation) and you wish to be able to rely on that advice, you must ask for the advice to be confirmed by us in writing. Advice is valid as at the date it was given.

#### **Retention of papers**

You have a legal responsibility to retain documents and records relevant to your financial affairs. During the course of our work we may collect information from you and others relevant to your tax and financial affairs. We will return any original documents to you if requested.

Documents and records relevant to your tax affairs are required by law to be retained as follows:

*Individuals, trustees and partnerships:*

- a) with trading or rental income: 5 years and 10 months after the end of the tax year
- b) otherwise: 22 months after the end of the tax year

*Companies, Limited Liability Partnerships, and other corporate entities:*

- c) Six years from the end of the accounting period

Whilst certain documents may legally belong to you, we may destroy correspondence and other papers that we store electronically or otherwise that are more than seven years old, except documents we think may be of continuing significance. You must tell us if you wish us to keep any document for any longer period.

**The Provision of Services Regulations 2009**

We are registered to carry on audit work in the UK by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. Details of our audit registration can be viewed at [www.auditregister.org.uk](http://www.auditregister.org.uk) for the UK and [www.cro.ie/auditors](http://www.cro.ie/auditors) for Ireland, under reference number C002374663.

We are authorised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales to carry out the reserved legal activity of non-contentious probate in England and Wales. Details about our probate registration can be viewed at [www.icaew.com/probate](http://www.icaew.com/probate), under reference number C002374663.

Our professional indemnity insurer is QBE Insurance Group, One Plantation Place, 30 Fenchurch Street, London EC3M 3BD. The territorial coverage is worldwide excluding professional business carried out from an office in the United States of America or Canada.

*Alternate Arrangements*

If, for whatever reason, we are unable to continue to provide probate services, we have made arrangements with Mrs Susan Vandersteen of Field Seymour Parkes LLP for the continuation of probate work for our clients.

**Timing of our services**

If you provide us with all information and explanations on a timely basis in accordance with our requirements, we will plan to undertake the work within a reasonable period of time in order to meet any regulatory deadlines. However, failure to complete our services prior to any such regulatory deadline would not, of itself, mean that we are liable for any penalty or additional costs arising