

The Court Funds Office currently holds unclaimed sums of money dating back to the year 1726 and is responsible for the unclaimed balances fund. The fund is made up of money paid into court that has not been claimed after a reasonable period of time, usually ten years, or where the account holder cannot be found.

Following changes to both the Administration of Justice Act 1982 and the Court Funds Rules 2011, with effect from 1st June 2024 all unclaimed accounts which have been dormant for 30 years or more will be surrendered and the right to claim will be extinguished. This will result in all existing accounts which have been dormant for 30 years or more being surrendered from that date and any accounts which reach the 30-year dormancy subsequently will be surrendered when that date is reached.

Searching the unclaimed balances fund

If you would like to search the unclaimed balances fund and you know the account name and/or account number you can enter those details into our online unclaimed balances index:

<https://find-unclaimed-court-money.service.justice.gov.uk/>

If you find an account in the index that you feel you are entitled to you should write to us at the following address:

Unclaimed Balances
Court Funds Office
Sunderland
SR43 3AB

or email: Enquiries@cfo.gov.uk

Your letter should include a printed report from the index showing the relevant account. To help us determine if you are entitled to further information about the account you must also provide as much information as you can about the account and your entitlement to it, for example:

- The title of the court proceedings;
- The name of the court;
- Relevant dates;

- The name of the person who lodged the money into court;
- The name of the person for whose benefit the funds were lodged;
- Details of the link between you and any of the above.

We will also need proof of identification (such as a copy of your passport or driving licence) and evidence of your interest in the fund (such as a copy of a court order). Please do not send any original documents. Copies are acceptable.

If you do not know the account name or number and would like us to perform the search on your behalf please write to us at above address. In order for us to perform the search you will need to provide the same information as listed above.

Please be aware that:

- The Court Funds Office cannot advise on whether you are entitled to the money - that is for a judge to decide;
- Court Funds Office records are confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone who cannot provide evidence of their interest in an account;
- The Court Funds Office does not hold any original court documents. You will need to contact the relevant court directly who may be able to provide you with further information about obtaining original court documents;
- The Court Funds Office cannot answer any questions about entitlement by descent or relationship, legal procedures or selection of legal advisers;
- The Court Funds Office does not employ 'unclaimed money agents' (persons who claim to be able to recover money held in court for a fee or a percentage of the amount). We recommend that you seek independent advice before making a payment to any agency in respect of money alleged to be held in court on your behalf.

How to contact the Court Funds Office

Customer Helpline

0300 0200 199

Email

enquiries@cfo.gov.uk

Address

Court Funds Office
Sunderland
SR43 3AB

Court Funds Office
DX 328004
Sunderland 19

Making a claim

We will notify you in writing of the result of any search we perform on your behalf. To obtain payment out you will have to apply to the court that originally dealt with the case. It is likely that you will be required to complete a court application form, but it is best to check with the relevant court as to their requirements. To find the relevant court details check:

<https://www.gov.uk/find-court-tribunal>

Applications to the court usually attract a fee and it is possible that the fund may turn out to be of lesser value than the fee charged.

Where the court of origin is unable to deal with an application for payment out because it no longer holds any paperwork in relation to the original proceedings, an application may be made to the Senior Master of the King's Bench Division instead. An application to the Senior Master must be accompanied by a witness statement (www.gov.uk/government/publications/court-funds-witness-statement).

The court will notify us if your application is successful. We will then make the payment to your bank account. Please note that the process can take up to 12 months. The CFO cannot take responsibility for any delay in the payment out of funds and you should not rely on funds being available until the payment has been cleared in your bank account.

If you are making a claim to the court within 12 months of the dormancy period expiring, you must contact the CFO at the email address below, with the title of the account, case number and account number, stating that you have made a claim to the court with the date the claim was submitted. This will put a block on the account to prevent it being surrendered whilst the court consider your claim. You should also inform the court of this, so they are aware in case there are any issues with the claim:

Email: UCM-claiminprogress@cfo.gov.uk
Or call on 0300 020 0199

Proving an entitlement

The main sources of evidence are:

- Orders of the High Court, county court and Court of Protection;
- Wills, grants of probate or letters of administration;
- Birth, marriage and death certificates;
- Census returns.

Orders of the High Court, county court and Court of Protection

For orders made by the court write to the court that originally dealt with the case. Contact details for specific courts including the Court of Protection are available from: <https://courtribunalfinder.service.gov.uk>

The National Archives also retains a selection of orders made by the High Court. For further information write to: National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU (tel. 020 8876 3444) www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

Wills, grants of probate or letters of administration

Since 1858 these have been kept at the Principal Registry of the Family Division. You can search and download Prerogative Court of Canterbury wills made between 1384 and 12 January 1858 on the National Archives website: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/wills-1384-1858/

Birth, marriage and death certificates

The General Register Office holds birth, adoption, marriage, civil partnership and deaths records since 1837. You can order certificates from the General Register Office by phone (tel: 0300 123 1837), post (PO Box 2, Southport, Merseyside PR8 21D) or email (<https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/default.asp>).

Indexes to all registered births, marriages and deaths in England and Wales are available to view online through several specialist organisations and websites. You can also view the indexes at a library or office in your area. Further information is available on the Gov.uk website www.gov.uk/research-family-history.

Before 1 July 1837, only baptisms, marriages and burials were registered. If you need help with identifying likely places to look for births and marriages, try www.familysearch.org operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This acts as an informal index to the parish and non-conformist registers. For members of the Church of England and the Church in Wales, these events were recorded in the parish registers. These are now usually held by the appropriate County Record Office.

Census returns

Census records for England and Wales from 1841 to 1911 are available online (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/census-records.htm). Later censuses will not be available until 100 years after the date they were conducted. Most local and county records offices hold microfilm or microfiche copies of the 1841 to 1901 census returns for their own areas. Census returns can also usually be viewed at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints' Family History Centres.

Estates which have fallen to the Crown

Estates of people who have died intestate and without known kin are known as 'bona vacantia' and fall to the Crown. If you believe you are entitled to such an estate, write to the appropriate address below. You will need to outline the basis of your claim, stating the full name of the deceased person, the date of death, the last known address and approximate age.

If the deceased person lived in England and Wales, write to: Government Legal Department (Bona Vacantia), PO Box 2119, Croydon, CR90 9QU (tel: 020 7210 4700). If the deceased person lived in Cornwall, write to: The Duchy of Cornwall, 10 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LA (tel: 020 7834 7346). If the deceased person lived in Lancashire, write to: The Duchy of Lancaster, 1 Lancaster Place, Strand, London WC2E 7ED.

Funds held in court in Scotland

Enquires concerning funds lodged in the Court of Session and other unclaimed sums resulting from liquidations, bankruptcies, judicial factories etc are held for seven years by The Accountant of Court, Hadrian House, Callendar Business Park, Callendar Road, Falkirk FK1 1XR (tel: 01324 678300).

After that, they are transferred to the Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer, Crown Office, 25 Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1LA (tel: 0844 561 3899 or 0131 243 3210). Enquires concerning Scottish estates which have fallen to the Crown should also be made to the Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer.

Other enquires may be made to the National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House, 2 Princes Street, Edinburgh EH1 3YY (tel: 0131 535 1314).

Funds held in court in Northern Ireland

For funds lodged in court in Northern Ireland since 1921, write to: The Accountant General, Court Funds Office, Ground Floor, Laganside House, 23-27 Oxford Street, Belfast BT1 3LA (tel: 0300 200 7812). For records before the institution of the Supreme Court of Northern Ireland in 1921, contact the Accountant of the High Court of Justice in Dublin.

Funds in court in Ireland

For funds under the control of the Supreme Court and High Court of Justice in Ireland, write to: The Accountant of Courts of Justice, 3rd Floor, 15-24 Phoenix Street North, Smithfield, Dublin 7 (tel: 353 1 8886211).