

COMPANY ADMIN Reviewed 30 Apr 2026

Switching Accountants Checklist

A practical handover checklist for UK limited companies changing accountants, covering timing, clearance, records, access and follow-up checks.

Switching accountants is a normal professional process, not a confrontation. Whether you have outgrown your current firm, need better advice, or fees have crept up without value to match, the handover itself is well-trodden territory.

This checklist covers what to do before, during and after the switch so nothing falls through the cracks and you do not end up paying twice for the same year.

01 Before you switch

Switching mid-year is fine, but timing and expectations matter. Answer these before you start the handover.

- What is actually wrong with the current arrangement?** Fees, responsiveness, lack of advice, expertise gap or personality mismatch
- When does your current engagement letter renew?** Check for notice periods or annual renewal cycles
- Where are you in the year end cycle?** Just before or just after year end is usually cleanest
- Are there outstanding fees with your current accountant?** Most firms will hold professional clearance until invoices are settled
- What software are you on, and does the new firm support it?** A software migration is a separate project from the accountant switch

02

Questions for the new accountant

Use this before you commit, not after the engagement letter is signed.

- Specialism and fit**, including whether they regularly work with founder-led limited companies like yours
- What is included in the fee**, and what is billed extra, including year end, corporation tax, VAT, payroll and advisory calls
- Who actually does the work?** Partner, manager, junior team or sole practitioner
- Their software stack and process**, especially whether they use portals, cloud accounting and document capture
- Their response time for emails and queries**, with a clear expectation rather than a vague promise
- Whether they offer an introductory call** to understand the business before quoting

A firm that quotes without asking questions may not yet understand the shape of the work.

03

The handover process

Once you decide to switch, the new accountant normally runs this process. You should still know what is supposed to happen.

- Sign an engagement letter with the new firm** to start the process formally
- Sign a client authority letter** allowing the new firm to contact the old one and the old firm to release information
- The new accountant sends a professional clearance letter** to the outgoing firm
- The outgoing firm responds** with clearance and a handover pack, or refusal with reasons
- Outstanding fees are settled** with the outgoing firm if any
- HMRC agent authorisations are transferred**, including corporation tax, VAT, PAYE or self assessment where relevant
- Software access is transferred**, with the new firm added and the old firm's access removed

The whole process typically takes two to four weeks from engagement letter signature, longer if unpaid fees or queries delay the outgoing firm's response.

04

What should be in the handover pack

Standard professional handover should include the records needed to pick up the file cleanly.

- The most recent statutory accounts**, signed and filed
- The most recent corporation tax computation and CT600**
- Trial balance and nominal ledger** as at the last accounting period end
- Tax computations and capital allowances pools** brought forward
- Losses carried forward**, if any
- Director's loan account schedule** showing brought-forward balance
- VAT returns and workings** for the current and prior period
- Payroll year-to-date records**, if the switch is mid-year
- Active HMRC correspondence**, including enquiries, late filing notices or payment plans
- Confirmation statement filing details and due date**
- Companies House authentication code**, if held by the outgoing firm

If the outgoing firm holds original documents, those should usually come back to you rather than to the new firm.

05

After the switch

These checks stop old access and old addresses lingering after the handover.

- Check HMRC agent authorisations are live** in your HMRC business tax account for each tax
- Remove the old firm's access** from accounting software, banking and portals
- Update your registered office or service address** if it was at the old firm's premises
- Confirm where statutory mail is going**, especially Companies House and HMRC correspondence
- Keep copies of everything** the old firm produced, including accounts, tax returns and working papers

You may need historic documents for HMRC enquiries up to six years later.

When professional clearance is refused

Refusal is rare, but it can happen if outstanding fees have not been settled, or if the outgoing firm is aware of a professional or ethical reason the new firm should not act, such as money laundering concerns, an ongoing dispute or a conflict of interest.

A fee dispute is the most common reason. If clearance is held over fees, paying the disputed invoice under protest if necessary usually unlocks the process. Genuine ethical refusals are very rare for normal businesses.

A note on loyalty

Founders sometimes feel guilty about switching, especially if the relationship goes back years. Your accountant is a professional service provider. If the service no longer fits, switching is the right call. A good outgoing accountant will release you cleanly.

BEFORE USING

This checklist is a practical prompt for a professional handover, not legal advice. Your new accountant should guide the clearance process and tell you what they need.

Thinking about switching? Lean Ledger handles handovers regularly and runs the process from our end.