

For immediate release

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MORE OF US WILL NEED TO PUT OUR HOUSE IN ORDER FOR CHARITY IF DONATIONS ARE TO GROW SAYS THE IPW

Charitable giving often makes the headlines when an event or disaster forces us to think about the needs of others, but the majority of us totally fail to remember our favourite charities and causes when we are making our Wills, says the Institute of Professional Willwriters **(08456 442042)**.

When left to our own devices, without a prompt of TV footage, emotionally-charged broadcast material and tugs at the heart-strings, only around 5% of those of us who make a Will leave anything to charity. As only around 30% of people make a Will prior to their death, this means that charities are starved of vital funds that, in many cases, end up being handed over to the Exchequer in the form of taxes.

The IPW says that, increasingly, this is because people are trying to make their own Wills, or using the services of ill-trained individuals, who do not highlight the benefits of remembering good causes.

Once all the costs to the estate are paid off, anyone leaving money and possessions worth more than a current value of £275,000, will have to pay 40% Inheritance Tax on the balance, so on an estate of £300,000, the taxman will receive £10,000 and the beneficiaries £290,000. However, gifts to charity are exempt from both Inheritance and Capital Gains taxes, so a gift of £25,000 from a £300,000 estate will result in the charity receiving £25,000, the beneficiaries of the Will (family and/or friends) £275,000 and the taxman nothing.

The skill of a truly professional Will writer is to make sure that the Will is written in a watertight way. The IPW's motto is 'It's Perfectly Worded' with fully trained members, who have passed professional examinations and undertaken other stringent professional requirements, being well versed in the art of getting the phraseology just right.

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Paul Sharpe, Chairman of the IPW says: *"In the case of a charity the role of the professional Willwriter is to prompt the individual client and ask questions relating to their desire to leave a legacy to a charity or charities of their choice. It has been shown that less than one in five of us will spontaneously mention such a wish without prompting.*

"From there, we need to word the Will in such a way that the gift to the charity cannot be disputed. The most simplistic example of this is in getting the full name of the Charity exactly right – something that many individuals fail to do, causing problems, at a later date, when the charity tries to access the bequest."

The current mood within Britain is for charities to band together to help raise awareness of the reasons to give to others when making a Will, 130 charities having joined the Remember a Charity campaign. Fundamentally, however, the biggest difference that could be made in this area would be for more people to bother to make a Will in the first place.

Paul Sharpe comments: *'When 70% of Britons do not make a Will, charities are dependent on bequests from a small fraction of the remaining 30% of the population. Death is something that we all try to avoid thinking about, but the implications of not planning for your passing away are huge. The general public need to be encouraged to make a Will to continue to support their favourite charity after their death, rather than just believing that this is an action for the living.'*

Apart from the psychological issues that prevent some from planning how their estate will be divided, the other main obstacle is that of cost. We have grown up in a society in which costly solicitors' fees have been our main experience with regard to Willwriting and one in which we now find ourselves plagued by unprofessional and unqualified so-called Wills experts.

The IPW battles against both of these areas, having highly competitive charges that start at around £50 for a single Will or £80 for a mirror will for a couple. It also campaigns relentlessly to purge the industry of the untrained element, insisting on higher standards and legislation that will combat this current scourge.

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Paul Sharpe believes the mood of the nation is turning and that the desire to give to others is on the increase following incidents such as the Tsunami. However, unless well-trained Will writers sit down with a higher number of consumers wanting to put their house in order to cater for their death, at any age, charities are still likely to miss out on a large slice of the potential funds that could have assisted others.

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Press calls: Jane Hunt/David Aaron, 01253 851188