

Draft release

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DON'T LET YOUR CHRISTMAS MOOD LEAD TO YOU BEING A WILLWRITING CASUALTY

Leading Willwriting organisation, the Institute of Professional Willwriters (IPW), is urging vulnerable members of society not to allow Christmas mood swings to affect their common sense and judgement.

The IPW's worry is that the elderly and those living alone might let down their guard when it comes to drawing up a Will.

"Christmas is a time when emotions are heightened. Sometimes this can cause people to do things under emotional stress that they would not do at other times", says IPW Chairman Paul Sharpe.

"With thoughts of family members at their height over the Christmas period, there is often a desire to put last wishes in writing, so that members of the family are remembered in a Will. Unfortunately, having a Will drawn up is not a guarantee that your family will receive your money and property. It all depends who draws up your Will."

The IPW points out that:

- There is no requirement for anyone offering a Willwriting service to have any qualifications in the subject – this includes solicitors. Some don't have professional indemnity insurance that would compensate intended beneficiaries if a Will was drawn up incorrectly.
- A Will can become invalid, if mistakes are such that the document does not meet the requirements to be a valid legal document.
- Unclear wording within a Will can force the courts to step in and decide how the wording should be interpreted.
- Not all solicitors have undergone training in Willwriting, so it is important to check out the credentials of anyone claiming they

offer a Willwriting service, however capable they appear at face value.

If you are shopping for a Will this Christmas, follow this advice:

- Don't be tempted to cut corners by making your Will yourself, or on line, or through a business that offers the lowest price.
- If you use a professional Willwriter, check that they are a member of the IPW. This is **the only** Willwriting organisation in the country to insist on professional qualifications, on-going training, professional indemnity insurance and all its members work to a Code of Practice. You can place your trust in its members.
- Ask to see certificates/evidence of qualifications and then check with the bodies concerned that they are aware of the person claiming to have these credentials.
- Make sure that any prices quoted to you are given in writing, **on the understanding that this is the whole sum you will be asked to pay for the agreed service.**

Unfortunately, many of the cowboy Willwriting companies will quote one price and then increase the final bill by several hundred pounds.

The IPW receives many phone calls, each year, from families who are distressed about the repercussions of a badly drawn up Will.

Since 1991, it has campaigned for regulation and higher standards in its profession, operating as a self-regulated body that strictly requires members to have the right qualifications and experience to both write Wills and take instructions.

The IPW became the first organisation in its sector to successfully complete the first stage of the OFT's Consumer Codes Approval Scheme (CCAS), in early 2008 and hopes to take its Code of Practice through to second stage approval within the next few months.

Paul Sharpe says: "Making the elderly and vulnerable, as well as other members of society, aware of how many pot-holes exist when seeking out a Willwriter is essential. We don't want to see people being caught out by the emotions of Christmas and then losing out, or creating situations in which their loved ones will lose out, at some point in the future."

More details about the IPW can be found a www.ipw.org.uk or by ringing 08456 442042.

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