

For immediate release

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**INSTITUTE OF PROFESSIONAL WILLWRITERS CALLS FOR GOVERNMENT TO
PROTECT CONSUMERS AFTER DISAPPOINTING WHITE PAPER**

The Institute of Professional Will Writers (**08456 442042**) has expressed its disappointment with the Government, after its announcement (October 17, 2005) that it does not find any compelling arguments for statutory regulation of will writing – potentially putting the consumer at risk of exploitation by get-rich-quick companies.

The findings were announced in the Government's White Paper, 'The Future of Legal Services: Putting Consumers First.' Despite the decision not to institute statutory regulation, the IPW, which is a self-regulating body that campaigns for higher standards within the sector, is heartened by the fact that the government agrees with its argument for the need to improve standards of will writing and related services.

Whilst the IPW welcomes voluntary regulation, it states that this is by no means ideal, as this fails to address the biggest issue – that the cowboy element to the industry, and incompetent, can continue to legitimately operate, with little or no training and continue to offer will writing services to the public. Those who don't adopt the highest standards, by becoming IPW Members, and who don't show themselves willing to be regulated and protect their clients with adequate insurance, are causing consumers to be the losers.

The Government's proposals will do nothing to change this unhappy situation, as voluntary regulation already exists, via IPW membership, to those who are prepared to study and accept the costs associated with qualification.

The IPW only offers membership to those who pass its entrance exam, or an equivalent, undergo continuous training, have a minimum of £2 million professional indemnity cover in place and who abide by strict codes of conduct. It continuously campaigns for higher standards in its profession, but also charges far less for a Will writing service than a solicitor would charge.

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Due to strict training and examination of its members, the IPW continues to enjoy negligible levels of complaints and after 15 years of practice, no member has ever suffered a successful claim for negligence. The IPW believes that this is because it, as a body, is unique in insisting that every single member sits entrance examination before membership is awarded, has cleared on Criminal Records Bureau check and is not a disqualified solicitor or director.

Businesses electing to be part of the proposed regulatory regime, will be playing on the same level playing field – one that meets the requirements set out in the Clementi report of December 2004: Entry standards and training, Rule Making, Monitoring and enforcement, Complaints and Discipline.

Chairman of the IPW, Paul Sharpe says: "We are concerned about the cost and effectiveness of any consumer education schemes mentioned in the White Paper. The cost of being part of the proposed voluntary regulatory scheme may be such that the regime will be too expensive to deliver and therefore will have nothing to recommend it - as well as being ineffective in protecting the consumer."

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