

COWBOY WILLWRITING LIKELY TO SNOWBALL DURING THE RECESSION

Leading Willwriting organisation, the Institute of Professional Willwriters (IPW) is warning that the recession could lead to a proliferation of cowboy Willwriters using tactics that are more unscrupulous than ever.

There are estimated to be hundreds of these cowboy Willwriters across the country, claiming to be trained to draw up legally binding Wills. In many cases, they do not have the qualifications required to handle this work and are simply following a get-rich-quick strategy.

The economic recession is likely to cause a snowball effect, increasing the number of cowboy operators in different communities.

The IPW requires all of its members to sit and pass an entrance exam, to have professional indemnity insurance, to complete ongoing training every year and to work to a Code of Practice.

It became the first organisation in the Willwriting sector to successfully complete the first stage of the OFT's Consumer Codes Approval Scheme (CCAS), earlier this year. It hopes to take its Code of Practice through to second stage approval in the next few months.

In a recession, the desire for operators to cut costs by opting out of professional standards and regulation is very tempting.

The other problem is that many of the Willwriting franchises, who claim to be competent professionals, are in this sector purely for financial gain. This means that the bill you receive after a Will has been drawn up, may bear no reflection at all to the price quoted at the start. Consumers should make sure they are not going to be fleeced when requesting a Willwriting service.

IPW Chairman, Paul Sharpe, says: "The concept of cowboy builders is well known and consumer programmes have helped educate the public about the practices used by some rogue traders within the construction and building sectors. They have not done as great a job with the Willwriting sector.

"For this reason, we want people to fix a picture of a cowboy builder in their head, but visualise him holding a Will and pen. When they want a Willwriting service, they should follow exactly the same steps required when getting a quote for a building job. They need to get their quote, get it in writing and only pay this sum for the agreed service. If they are asked for additional sums, they should report the Willwriter to their local Trading Standards."

To avoid falling prey to a cowboy Willwriter, you can contact the IPW – the only Willwriting organisation that insists on professional standards, qualifications and professional indemnity insurance. The IPW can be contacted on 08456 442042, with more details at www.ipw.org.uk

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