

## Why making a will is so important

If making a will has become a longstanding fixture on your to-do list, you're in good company; it is estimated that only 36% of people in the UK have made a will, and even fewer have one that is up-to-date. Perhaps you are daunted by the prospect or simply haven't got round to it. However, the benefits of making a will, and keeping it up to date, are numerous; from offering peace of mind and potential inheritance tax benefits to saving your loved ones from unnecessary stress and deprivation.

Simon Cook, partner and head of the wills, probate and trusts team at leading Gloucestershire law firm Willans LLP, explains why making a will is so important.

"We can't control when we die, but making a will gives individuals control and peace of mind over what happens afterwards for those we leave behind. Making a will ensures that your partner (whether a spouse, civil partner or other partner not recognised by law) and any children are adequately provided for and do not find themselves dependent on others.

"Most people believe their home and possessions will automatically pass to their immediate family when they die. Sadly, without a will, there's no guarantee this will be the case.

"A will allows you to remember grandchildren, godchildren, friends and charities. You can make financial provision for pets and leave details of your wishes for them. You may also specify your choice for burial or cremation and, if you wish, the use of your body for transplants or medical research."

When it comes to making a will, it's best to call in the professionals, says Simon. "While it can be tempting to save money by making a 'DIY-will', it can be a huge risk. It is very easy to make a mistake with a homemade will and any mistake could mean that your wishes are unclear or could even make the will legally unenforceable. The right, professionally-prepared will can also reduce hugely the likelihood of a disagreement between beneficiaries or a claim against the estate."

And it's not enough just to make a will. "Every will needs to be reviewed regularly and brought up to date if your circumstances change. For example, if you marry, divorce, remarry or enter into or dissolve a civil partnership, any existing will may become invalid" Simon explains.

Throughout Make a Will Month (this April), lawyers from Willans LLP are donating their expertise and time free of charge to write or update straightforward wills. In return, people are asked to make a donation to Cobalt to help fund scanning and diagnosis, research, prevention, specialised nursing posts and cancer facilities for local people. To enquire about making a will in return for a donation to Cobalt, contact Tom O'Riordan in Willans' wills, probate and trusts team ([tom.oriordan@willans.co.uk](mailto:tom.oriordan@willans.co.uk)).