

FACT SHEET 1

WHY MAKE A WILL

Having an up-to-date Will is really important, but less than half of people in the UK have one when they die. This means that family and friends could well be faced with trying to sort out quite a muddle: most of the estate's funds may be lost to costs and tax, and those you may have wished to benefit may end up with nothing.

A Will is your way of knowing that your final wishes will be carried out. It allows you to control what happens after your death in the same way that you have made financial choices during your lifetime - such as providing for your loved ones or supporting causes you care about.

Many people don't have a Will because they think it's too expensive, or they simply forget to get one drawn up. But it's simpler and cheaper than you think.

Dying without a Will

When a Will hasn't been made the Court will appoint administrators to manage your estate, who may not be the people you would have chosen at all. This could cause difficulties for those left behind especially with family situations becoming increasingly complicated.

If there is no Will, legal rules will specify where the estate's assets must go:

- Partners and children will not automatically receive your estate
- Close relatives may have a claim on the estate - including the family home
- If you leave no surviving relatives, everything could pass to the State.

Even if you don't have a family, you will still want to ensure that your possessions go where you wish - perhaps to friends or causes you have supported.

Having a Will means that once all debts, expenses and obligations have been covered, the remainder of your estate will be distributed exactly as you want. It will make your personal wishes known and ensure they are followed.

Dying without an up-to-date Will

If you don't keep your Will up-to-date it might no longer accurately reflect your wishes. Any changes in your life such as marriage, registered civil partnership, divorce or a new grandchild, may mean you need to update your Will.

However, it's really important that any changes are recorded correctly; if they are done directly onto your Will, they can invalidate the whole document.

We recommend you use a Solicitor, but you can download our Fact Sheets first to save you time and money.

Leaving a legacy

Many people use their Will to make a gift to a charity they support, or which is important to them in some way.

When you do make, or update, your Will and have remembered your loved ones, please consider leaving a gift in your Will to Avon Wildlife Trust.

Charitable legacies are exempt from Inheritance Tax, so all of your gift will be used to help protect wildlife. A **codicil** can easily be added to include a charitable gift.

Download Adding a Codicil from our website.

If you do choose to remember us in your Will - thank you. Whatever your gift - large or small - the Trust will use it to help save and protect our precious wildlife.

The content of this fact sheet is merely informative and should not be relied upon as a substitute for legal advice. Avon Wildlife Trust advises anyone making or updating a Will to seek independent advice from a Solicitor.

*A useful source of local Solicitors dealing with Wills and Probate can be found at:
www.lawsociety.org.uk/choosingandusing.law*