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Local Will writer puts Panorama programme in perspective

Alan Giddings from Giddings Lane Will Consultancy claims the Panorama programme aired on Monday 9th August supported what he has always said: that a Will is one of the most important documents a person will ever write and should be carried out by a qualified person belonging to a regulated body.

Alan is a member of the Society of Will Writers (SWW), the country's leading professional body for the Will writing industry.

Alan said that the programme's focus on problems experienced by a small handful of people who had asked Will writers to handle their probate masked the real issues people should be addressing.

"As with most documentaries of this type, the programme sought to suggest there is a major problem within the Will writing industry by show-casing half a dozen cases – actually concerning probate administration rather than Will writing – only one of which was proven to be a fraudulent case.

"The reality is that the SWW alone has 2000 members who write some 200,000 Wills a year with hardly a problem. Our insurers have handled just 11 cases in the past 16 years.

"We work in an unregulated market not through choice but because successive governments have deemed it unnecessary to bring in regulation. However, the SWW would support regulation.

"The SWW is supporting and working with the Legal Services Board in England to regulate or at least licence Will writers and is pressing for tighter regulation of probate and client funds.

"The simple truth though is that no amount of legislation will eliminate fraudulent behaviour in any industry. One of the Will writers featured in the programme was, as the Panorama reporter admitted, a struck-off Solicitor. The legal industry is clearly not immune then to the type of issue highlighted by the programme but which seemed to suggest lay at the door of Will writers.

"What the programme should have highlighted was that people need to read and understand the terms and conditions of the literature they are signing and if they don't understand, don't sign until they are fully satisfied. They should ask the person dealing

with them about their experience, qualifications, insurance cover and membership of a professional organisation.

“In any industry there will always be the occasional bad apple but this shouldn’t cloud the key issue which, as the programme itself highlighted at the opening, is that a Will is a vitally important document which is best handled by a professional whose skills are dedicated to Will Writing.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

The Society of Will Writers (SWW) is a non-profit making self regulatory organisation which seeks to Protect the Public and serve the interests of those men and women who are active professionals in our field.

A SWW member is covered by Professional Indemnity Insurance and is obliged to provide customers with proof of this if requested. The member is bound by the SWW's code of conduct and disciplinary and complaints procedures, copies of which are available from the society upon request.

A SWW member is obliged to provide a quotation - in writing if requested - of the price to be paid for the preparation of a Will or Wills, including any extra costs that are to be incurred, before proceeding to prepare a Will or Wills.

All SWW members go through a stringent vetting procedure and continuing training to ensure that they are suitable persons to properly write a will.