

## “LIFE CHANGES”

A POLICE OFFICER THROUGH THE AGES

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF  
HARVEY HOWELL SOLICITORS



## OUR SERVICE TO MEMBERS IS TO PROVIDE AN EDUCATION. WE HELP YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR ASSETS FROM START TO FINISH

We recently gave a presentation to a group where the average age of attendee was 70. Many of the issues we raised were met with surprise by the audience. They asked why things so important were not common knowledge. Our answer was that it should be and that is our aim – to make them so. However, the real answer is that, if they are lucky, they are only the second generation to have ever owned significant assets, like a house, so this important knowledge would not have been needed by their grandparents and parents – they are the first generation to need it.

“ We think education is really important and a lot of what we do is just about that – giving information and knowledge to members about how to look after their assets and welfare and deal properly with things if we become ill or pass away.

We do this by offering a service to the federations and NARPO through their membership services – we offer free seminars and individual advice sessions – advice surgeries – to members. This has met with huge success and we’ve advised thousands of officers and retired officers. It is really not just about Wills – we offer a comprehensive service to members to discuss their needs and tailor the advice they need to their individual circumstances.

The wealthy have been taking the advice for generations. Look at the Duke of Westminster who died recently with an estate of £9 billion. His son did not pay inheritance tax. That family certainly took up solicitors on their offer of education – and it paid off!

One key difference between Hugh Grosvenor and many other people is access to information – knowledge and education about how to protect and preserve family assets from attack from any number of sources! And they have been doing it for 250 years! Education about these things is priceless – traditionally reserved for the wealthy – but available to everyone – that’s what we provide.

### NEW RECRUIT

“I have no assets, spouse or children so I do not need a Will.”  
Maybe you are right - and we can tell you this to give you comfort at no cost.



However, please remember some your biggest assets have not yet arrived – your inheritance from your parents (and your grandparents). We receive many calls from serving officers who themselves are fine but they and their parents are thinking about the future and planning some protection if, for example, one of their parents develops dementia or suffers a stroke or their surviving grandparent has just gone into care and is paying £1,000 a week for that care.

### SERVING OFFICER

Most serving officers have assets, a partner or children and this is the stage when those officers acknowledge they should be taking some advice – even if it is just to put a Will in place. But please, not a basic Will which just repeats what the law says and leaves everything to the surviving spouse and then the children – this is not sufficient protection.



If properly advised, you can save your children’s inheritance if you die young and your partner meets or marries someone else, or goes into long term care. Most officers we meet would not be best pleased if they died and their assets, life insurance payments and pension ended up passing to another person unknown to them.

If you have young children you will want to be sure that in the event of you and your co-parent dying together and before your children reach 18, people you approve of will take care of the children. A guardian has parental responsibility for a child and can make important decisions for them such as those concerning medical treatment and education. A person who does not have parental responsibility, but who has care of a child, has only limited legal rights to do what is reasonable in all the circumstances to safeguard or promote the child’s welfare. In the absence of appointing a guardian, only the courts can do so – an informal agreement with relatives/friend is not enough.

**What if your children have disabilities or receive other means tested benefits?** These benefits will stop if they receive an inheritance unless a trust is incorporated into a Will.

**What if your children divorce after your death?** Not only do they lose their spouse and half their assets but also their share of your assets too.

150,000 people a year have a stroke and one third of those are under 60. Recent tragic events amongst our police community have shown how important it is to put a Lasting Power of Attorney in place, not just for financial affairs but also for health and welfare decisions.

### OLDER OR RETIRED

Many of the above issues apply to the retired officer with the inevitable increase in the incidence of stroke, death, dementia and so on.

We recently met with the son of a retired officer. His father was widowed and lived on his own and had a stroke. Whilst in hospital the water pipes burst at his home and caused £80,000 of damage. The house insurers subsequently refused to speak with the son



as he was not the policy holder. The son could not access his father’s bank accounts, pay bills, cancel direct debits and certainly not sell the house. The insurance company then refused to pay compensation because the home had been unoccupied for so long. To add insult to injury, social services put the retired officer into care – against the wishes of the son. Lasting Powers of Attorney could have dealt with all these problems.

**Have you already made a power of attorney?** Prior to October 2007 you could make an Enduring Power of Attorney which remains in force. However, these only covered a person’s property and financial affairs – not health and welfare. How would the son have kept his father out of the care home? Both types are important!

**50,000 people lose their homes each year to fund their care. Can this be prevented?** Do not fall for the expensive schemes sold to you by many non-solicitor legal advisors that promise to protect your home from these care home fees. Talk to us for specialist advice.

Many officers have made free Wills which not only fail to afford any of the protection against the threats set out above but have appointed banks as their Executors who may subsequently charge up to 5% of the estate value to administer the estate – that’s £15,000 on a £300,000 estate. Once you pass away it is not easy to change Executors but please let us help fix this for you before it’s too late.

Finally, the Ministry of Justice has announced changes to probate registration fees. The plans are to change the current, relatively nominal, fee of £215 to, for a typical retired officer’s estate, between £75 and £2,500 (in addition to any legal fees payable should you ask a solicitor to help you – as we always advise). Can this “stealth tax” be avoided?

## AFTER DEATH – WE ARE STILL HERE FOR YOUR FAMILY

We can help your family with probate and other matters at this difficult time.

### NEXT STEPS

Attend one of our free seminars or  
**FREE TWICE MONTHLY**  
surgeries at Progress House and  
take advantage of this education.

We maintain it is one of the most  
valuable things you can do!