31 January 2019

I am writing to alert you to our work to involve the charity sector in helping us design and establish a new service to notify charities when they have been left money in wills.

This follows our decision today to end HMCTS's current arrangement with Smee & Ford, a company, which, as I am sure you know, has provided a paid-for notification service to participating charities for several years. While this was established in good faith, we have since found that it is not consistent with the department's legal duties, and, with the help of charities themselves, we want to design new arrangements for the future.

We are very conscious of the important part that legacies play in funding essential charitable work across the country. More than 122,000 charitable bequests were contained in wills in 2017 alone, and we are committed to ensuring a notification system continues.

We will therefore work closely with Smee & Ford to seek to ensure that there is as little disruption as possible arising out of these changes over the six months' notice period while also seeking their views, based on their knowledge of the current service, regarding future options. During this time, we will also work with the charity sector and others to create a new and sustainable arrangement for providing a notification service to charities.

I have therefore invited representatives of ACEVO, NCVO, the Institute of Fundraising and Institute of Legacy Management to join a working group to bring together the views of the sector. I hope this goes some way to reassuring you that we want to create an arrangement that works for charities.

We will ensure that all decisions are communicated as widely as possible to keep all charities informed of developments on this important issue and you can find more information on www.gov.uk/hmcts.

Please do let me know if you have any questions or concerns by emailing me on changesomethingthatmatters@justice.gov.uk

Yours faithfully

Susan Acland-Hood
Chief Executive
HM Courts & Tribunals Service