



## **Press Release**

**Government urged to replicate other European countries with national will register in place to reduce number of lost wills**

**A national State will register would reduce delays around probate process and help prevent wills from being contested**

***“A register would help ease some of the huge financial and emotional upheaval faced by people when a loved one passes away”***

The continued absence of a national State register of wills in Ireland inevitably leads to unnecessary and lengthy delays in the locating of wills and is also leaving some wills at risk of not being found at all. This is according to one of Ireland’s leading life insurance and pensions companies, Royal London Ireland, which is calling on the Government to establish a national register of wills, which is available in most other European countries.

The lack of a national or central will register means it can be difficult for people to locate wills, particularly if the deceased individual has neglected to share the existence or location of their will with the beneficiaries before they passed away, or if the family don’t know the solicitor (if any) of the deceased individual.

Joe Charles Proposition Director at Royal London Ireland explained:

*“In many cases, the executor of an estate will have received a paper copy of a will some time before an individual seeks to locate it. It’s naturally very easy to misplace or to forget where this copy was left, and furthermore, an executor might not recall the name of the deceased person’s solicitor. As it currently stands, if the next of kin or executor of the estate does not have a copy of the will, a person wishing to locate a will often faces a very laborious and cumbersome process, compounded by the fact that wills only become public documents in Ireland once they have gone to probate. The delays often encountered with probate following the death of a loved one further exacerbate the whole process.”*

Research conducted by Royal London Ireland in 2016 found that it took 70 weeks (16 months) on average to process probate in Ireland<sup>1</sup>. Today, the national average probate processing time is considerably shorter

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<sup>1</sup> This was based on an analysis of life insurance claims conducted by Royal London Ireland, after it found that the time it was taking to process probate in Ireland was having a detrimental knock-on effect on the timeframe for processing life insurance policy claims.

at 11 weeks, according to the most recent figures<sup>2</sup>. However, probate can take much longer than this, depending on the complexity of the estate and the number of beneficiaries – and how quickly a will can be located, if indeed there is a will in place. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in some cases, probate can take around six months to a year to complete, sometimes more. Furthermore, when an ‘unknown’ will is found after probate has been granted, probate can then be revoked, causing huge distress for the families involved.

Mr. Charles added:

*“As one of the few European countries without a national will register, Ireland is way behind its European counterparts and European best practice in this regard. A national will register would enable a person making a will, or their solicitor, to register certain details of the will – such as the date of the will and the custodian of the will - with a central authority; thus making it easier to locate a will at the time it is needed and reducing the risk of the will remaining unknown or being found belatedly. A will register does not contain any details of the content of the will.*

*“There are many reasons why a will may have been forgotten about, lost or accidentally destroyed, or where an unknown later copy exists – a national register of wills would help ensure that such wills would not get lost or become untraceable in such circumstances. Furthermore, proponents of a national will register in Ireland have argued that the costs of setting up and maintaining such a register would be very limited.*

*“Sometimes people spend months trying to track down a will, which leaves them in limbo in terms of finalising the deceased’s estate. On other occasions where no will is found, probate goes ahead only to be revoked in later months, or sometimes years after the will is located. All of this causes huge distress for the families involved.*

*“A national will register would also have benefits for the many Irish people or Irish descendants living abroad who have family or connections in Ireland. The absence of a national register of wills in Ireland can complicate cross-border succession issues, as it can make it difficult for heirs who are living abroad to locate the wills of deceased individuals.*

*“Having an online-based national State will register could eliminate these problems. As one of the major technology hubs in the world, it should be relatively easy to develop an online-based solution in Ireland. One of the many innovative companies in the State could help develop this solution at a limited cost in a way which ensures all relevant stakeholders are engaged in the process so that the register works for all.*

*“We need only look at the Residential Property Price Register, which provides information on all residential properties purchased in the Republic of Ireland since 1 January 2010, to see how successful and useful a national online register can be.”*

As Ireland does not have a national will register, it is not part of the European Network of Registers of Wills Association (ENRWA), which facilitates searches for wills across participating European countries.

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<sup>2</sup> As per [Dáil Parliamentary Question, July 9 2025](#)

Royal London Ireland explained that a person wanting to locate a missing will in Ireland currently has three main options:

- For wills that have gone into probate since 1992, basic details of the will can be searched via the online probate register on the courts website<sup>3</sup>, as long as the individual searching has specific information, including the person's first name, their last name and the year in which they died. These basic details would then be used to apply for a copy of the will from the relevant probate office.
- For wills that pre-date 1992, a search of the National Archives would need to be conducted<sup>4</sup>, with the deceased individual's details typically needed in order to track down the records.
- Contact the family solicitor if it is known that a solicitor is holding a will.

The issue of a national will register has been brought to the Dáil several times. A Will Register Bill was first proposed to the sitting administration in 2011, with a Bill presented back in Dec 2016 and again in 2021. However, this legislation never progressed and the latest Bill has since lapsed<sup>5</sup>.

Mr. Charles of Royal London Ireland added:

*"We believe there would be strong merit in the Government progressing with the legislation necessary to put a national will register in place for Ireland. A national online State will register would make it easier to locate a will and confirm its validity, reduce probate delays and help prevent wills being contested. It would also help ensure that people's affairs are settled as smoothly as possible after they die and help ease some of the huge financial and emotional upheaval faced by people when a loved one passes away. Irish people deserve a national will register."*

- ENDS -

## **Notes to editors**

### **About Royal London Ireland:**

Royal London Ireland has a history of protecting its policyholders and their families, and it is committed to continue to do so for a long time to come. Our heritage in Ireland is 190 years starting when the Caledonian Insurance Company's first office opened on York Street, Dublin 2 in 1834. Today, Royal London Ireland is owned by The Royal London Mutual Insurance Society Limited – the UK's largest mutual life insurance, pensions and investment company, and in the top 30 mutuals globally, with assets under management of €211 billion, 8.6 million policies in force and over 4,800 employees. Figures quoted are as at 30 June 2025.

Royal London Ireland's office is based at 47-49 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2.

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<sup>3</sup> As per [Online Probate Register](#)

<sup>4</sup> As per [National Archives website](#)

<sup>5</sup> As per [latest Dail record](#)

### **Royal London Ireland's Funeral Payment Helping Hand**

Royal London Ireland's life insurance products include a feature known as the Funeral Payment Helping Hand, which will provide an advance payment of up to €10,000 to cover funeral costs of the deceased. For more details, visit <https://www.royallondon.ie/our-products/funeral-payment-helping-hand/>

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