

Directions for signing this will or codicil during the Covid-19 pandemic

Important note: this advice is up to date as at 24 March 2020. Advice is likely to change at short notice, so please speak to your Macfarlanes solicitor before signing, to check that this advice is current.

Printing/binding

Please:

- print your will or codicil in its entirety (ideally using two-sided printing); and
- staple it together in the top left hand corner.

If you cannot reliably print double-sided, you may wish to score a line diagonally through each blank page and initial it (together with your witnesses) prior to signature.

Witnesses

Obtain two witnesses: ideally these would be neighbours or those who are able to travel a minimal distance to you. It is very important that:

- they not be beneficiaries under the will or codicil, or the spouses or civil partners of beneficiaries; and
- that you do not ask your executors, or their spouses or civil partners, to act as witnesses.

Signature/dating

The witnesses do not need to be closer than two metres to you. The following would be sensible precautions:

- sign the will outside, to further reduce the risk of transmission; and
- you and the witnesses should use separate pens.

Fill in the date in words where blanks are left for the day and month, e.g. "this first day of April". This will normally be in two places:

- in the last paragraph of the will; and
- on the front cover.

Sign your name in the presence of **both** witnesses, where indicated at the end of the will or codicil.

Use your normal signature as, for example, you would use to sign a cheque.

You must all three be present when the will or codicil is signed and witnessed, though you can each step away from the document when the other two sign it.

It is very important that both witnesses are together **at the same time** with you when you sign the will or codicil: it is not sufficient for the witnesses to be present at different times. The legal profession is urgently seeking clarification on whether remote witnessing (e.g. via Skype) is permitted, but this is not currently valid.

The witnesses (in your presence) must sign where shown and print their names, addresses and occupations.

Other details

- Do not attach anything to the will or codicil: please avoid attaching paperclips or pins, since this may cause difficulties in proving the will.
- Please make no alterations to the will or codicil without consulting us.

Post-signature

- We cannot over-emphasise the importance of executing a will or codicil correctly. If this is not done, the will or codicil may not be accepted by the Probate Registry or may otherwise be ineffective in part or in whole. This may lead to a totally unintended result.
- Please scan or take a photo of the signature page and send a copy to your solicitor by email so that we can check it has been properly signed and witnessed.
- While our office remains closed, we recommend that you keep the will in a safe place at home and inform your solicitor and executors where it is kept.
- Once we are able to re-open our office, please post the signed will back to us at which point we can discuss whether it would be appropriate to re-sign a signature copy which is sewn up with a ribbon in our normal way.

Will storage

Once the current restrictions on travel are lifted, please speak to your solicitor about the options for storage of your will.

Macfarlanes LLP

20 Cursitor Street London EC4A 1LT

T +44 (0)20 7831 9222 | F +44 (0)20 7831 9607 | DX 138 Chancery Lane | macfarlanes.com

This note is intended to provide general information about some recent and anticipated developments which may be of interest. It is not intended to be comprehensive nor to provide any specific legal advice and should not be acted or relied upon as doing so. Professional advice appropriate to the specific situation should always be obtained. Macfarlanes LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England with number OC334406. Its registered office and principal place of business are at 20 Cursitor Street, London EC4A 1LT. The firm is not authorised under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000, but is able in certain circumstances to offer a limited range of investment services to clients because it is authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority. It can provide these investment services if they are an incidental part of the professional services it has been engaged to provide.