



Susan Acland-Hood  
Chief Executive  
HM Courts & Tribunals Service  
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United Kingdom

22 May 2019

Dear Ms Acland-Hood

### **Urgent action on legacy notification service**

We are writing to you on behalf of our members who are concerned about the lack of progress and information on a future legacy notification service. Charities are seeking urgent reassurance at the forthcoming meeting in June that there will be a clear plan in place to meet the timeframe you set out for both an interim solution and the introduction of a future new service to ensure that there is no delay or disruption to the charity sector.

We were encouraged that at the time of making the decision it was acknowledged how important this service is for charities with more than 122,000 charitable bequests contained in wills in 2017 alone and the commitment expressed from HMCTS to ensuring a notification system continues. An initial working group was called together, which has met once so far. The 6 month notice period for Smees & Ford's service is due to expire at the end of July and our members are now rightly concerned that a new service will not be ready in time and that a gap in service provision could appear to the detriment of the vital services the charity sector delivers. With a further meeting now expected in the second week of June, we will need to see real progress and tangible next steps set out to provide the reassurance needed for the charity sector.

One of the consequences of any delay would be that charities are unable to plan their future work and expenditure for their causes as the data plays an important role in informing likely income. Without knowing future income, charities will be hamstrung from effective future planning with the result being that future service delivery for beneficiaries can suffer, which demonstrates the importance of an appropriate notification service being ready in time. We also know that the ability to access charity bequests via a public database is valuable for increasing public information and awareness with lay executors as well as assisting in the prevention of fraud.

Both us, as representative bodies, and our charity members, are willing and happy to contribute and be involved in shaping the new service, but so far the opportunities to input and see progress have been minimal. Given the short time-frame that was implemented, we hope that the next meeting can provide the urgent reassurance that a service will indeed be ready to follow on from the previous one so that there is no disruption to the charity sector.

We stand ready to help and support where we can, and ask that you provide a clear way forward which we can share with our members and provide them the reassurance and information that they need to be ready for the new service.

We look forward to hearing from you shortly on this urgent matter.

Yours Sincerely,



Peter Lewis  
CEO, Institute of Fundraising



Rob Cope  
Director, Remember A Charity



Sir Stuart Etherington  
CEO, NCVO

*M. Lagden*

Matthew Lagden  
CEO, ILM



Vicky Browning,  
CEO, ACEVO