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"Where There's A Will" - There's A More Straightforward Probate **By Joanne Carroll (Joanne.Carroll@dbf-law.co.uk)**

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The BBC's popular 'Heir Hunters' show is just completing its latest run, however many members of the public are not heeding the advice given and do not have a Will.

For those who have not seen the show, it follows Probate Tracing firms, as they try to track down long lost family members of people who have died Intestate (without making a Will). It's a spin on popular genealogy programs such as 'Who Do You Think You Are?' but looks to trace living relatives, as opposed to ancestors.

If you die without having made a Will and family members cannot be traced, then it may be the case that treasured possessions, cash and property will go to the State, under The Intestates Estate Act 1952. When you factor in that it is generally estimated that in the region of 70% of adults in the UK do not have a Will, then the potential loss to family members is huge. Not to mention the distress caused to think of what may become of cherished personal items and family heirlooms if family members cannot be traced.

According to research by National Savings and Investments (NS&I) released this year, 36% of Britons do not know if their parents have made a Will or what their plans are to divide and distribute their estate. 27% of those surveyed revealed they are unaware where their parents keep their Wills.

People certainly need to recognise the importance of talking with their family about their later-life finances and their inheritance plans, in addition to ensuring that their own Wills are up-to-date.

As a Probate Manager at Davis Blank Furniss Solicitors, I am very familiar with the amount of work involved in administering an estate after someone has died. It is an emotional time for those left behind and disputes can sometimes arise between family members as to the wishes of their loved one. If a clear Will has been left, then it eases the stress and pressure on all concerned and it certainly makes it more straightforward for me to ensure that the wishes of the deceased are followed. It is very satisfying to know that you have carried out the last wishes of someone exactly as they intended.

For more information about making a Will or if you have recently lost someone and require help with administering their estate, please contact:

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