

Press Release
For Immediate Release
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Growth of Home Information Pack (HIP) market could attract "rogue traders" critics warn

Conveyancing experts urge sellers and estate agents to use only qualified legal professionals when commissioning HIPs

With Home Information Packs (HIPs) set to become compulsory from 1st June 2007, house sellers without an HIP will not legally be able to market a property after that date. As a result, HIP production is already becoming a substantial – and largely unregulated – industry in its own right, which means that estate agents and the house-buying public will need to choose their suppliers carefully.

According to conveyancing experts at Easy Convey (www.easyconvey.com), estate agents are already being contacted by a number of self-proclaimed HIP providers, including several companies based offshore. Because of the potential problems that can result from such a situation, Easy Convey has this week urged all UK estate agents and house sellers to use only licensed conveyers or lawyers for their HIP needs.

"Legal expertise should not be an optional extra when it comes to HIP production," says Dominic Cullis, MD, Easy Convey. **"Conveyancers have been undertaking all of the work required to piece together a HIP for many years, and therefore remain unmatched in terms of their experience of the processes involved. If an HIP is produced by an experienced legal professional, buyers can feel confident that the information provided is reliable."**

HIPs will contain certain compulsory documents (such as copies of the legal title, Energy Performance Certificate, Local Authority and Water & Drainage Searches), but may also include "Authorised" documents such as guarantees (for instance Corgi certificate for new gas boiler installations), Home Use and Contents forms, Legal Comment, other searches such as an Environmental report or, where appropriate Coal Mining Searches which can also be very valuable to the buyer. All of the documents that need to be included in an HIP are currently collated by law firms on every home purchase in any case, with the only additions being the Home Condition Report (which is still voluntary at the moment) and Energy Performance Certificate.

According to Easy Convey, a correctly produced, high-quality HIP based on sound legal advice

will streamline the selling process, since many issues will be resolved before the property is even brought to market. For example, if a qualified lawyer identifies that there is a problem with the right of way, or another defect in the title, then he or she could advise the client immediately, in order to ensure that these issues are resolved before marketing the property. Likewise, with legal experts on hand to produce the HIP, buyers will know a lot more about the property before they make an offer on it, conveyancing will be faster, and fewer sales will fall through because of any surprises in the survey.

As long as the minimum legal requirements are met, the final content of the HIPs will ultimately be decided as part of negotiations between the agent and the law firm. However, whilst offshore companies and non-legal experts will only be able to offer HIPs that meet the legal minimum, experienced lawyers will be able to offer added value with a number of optional extras, if desired, such as a legal synopsis of the Pack, environmental searches, the Home Condition Report, and a Common Registration Search.

The ability to produce HIPs in-house is good news for law firms too, since it has never been easier for to prepare HIPs "in-house" for their clients. The latest e-conveyancing software packages, such as Easy Convey's CASA, now allow for the generation of Home Information Packs (HIPs) from within the application itself. With CASA, after all of the HIP information is imported, a software wizard combines all of the selected documents into a standard format HIP, complete with the law firm's or introducer's own branded front and back cover and index pages.

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About Easy Convey Ltd

Easy Convey was established in April 2000 to market a range of electronic conveyancing products and services, all of which were developed in-house. By using this technology, conveyance lawyers can enjoy 50 percent more completions, without increasing staff levels. Easy Convey's unique Conveyancing Administration Software Application (CASA) is at the heart of the easyconvey.com electronic conveyancing software, and can significantly reduce conveyancing time for experts working within the property market. For more information please visit www.easyconvey.com

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