



**HOME INFORMATION PACKS**

**Summary**

This paper provides an update on Home Information Packs.

**Recommendation**

The Board is invited to note this report.

**Financial and Resourcing implications**

There are no financial or resource implications arising from this update paper.

**Equality and Diversity implications**

Equality and Diversity implications are being taken into account in the Law Society activity on HIPs.

**Freedom of Information**

This paper is public.

**Consultation**

The Law Society Taskforce is aware of the information in this update and meets monthly to coordinate the work on HIPs.

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<b>Date of Report</b>	22 March 2006

### Launch of implementation timetable by ODPM

1. On 16 March, the ODPM announced that the HIP Regulations will be made in June/July 2006 and issued a final Timeline for HIPs reiterating the government's commitment to implementation on 1 June 2007. (Timeline attached at Annex A )
2. The announcement has brought much-needed clarity and certainty to the process but it also indicates that the government has listened to stakeholder concerns about the need for a meaningful dry-run and for a proper evaluation of the pilot testing phase before the implementation date.
3. The Law Society response to the timeline (Annex B) welcomed the certainty but we continue to challenge the government on the very tight timetable and on the need to ensure that the Home Inspectors' training and accreditation process will be sufficiently robust to ensure consumer protection.

### Law Society HIP Taskforce

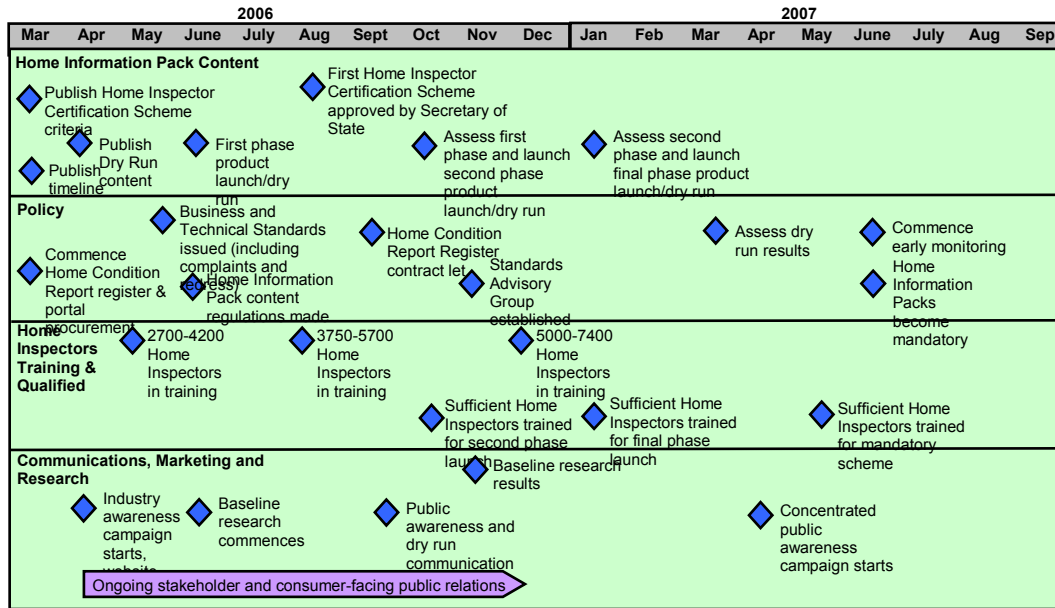
4. The Taskforce is focussing on the development of regulatory and ethical guidance to solicitors arising from their involvement in the preparation and delivery of HIP packs to clients. Draft guidance has been prepared in conjunction with the Professional Ethics Unit and will be on the agenda for the Taskforce meeting on 23 March. A paper has also been prepared highlighting the referral fees issues surrounding solicitor/estate agent interaction in the HIP production market and in the delivery of conveyancing services to clients.
5. The emerging market for HIPs, with some 120 pack providers launching products in this new, and potentially very lucrative, market, is highly competitive and poses a challenge for the Society in ensuring that solicitors are able to compete. It is important that professional conduct rules do not hinder their ability to operate on a level playing field
6. The Taskforce is also coordinating a marketing plan for the Law Society-endorsed HIP. The first phase of marketing has been underway since the autumn primarily via the regional events through the Society's regional offices and local law societies. The Gazette will continue to advertise the Law Society HIP and we will be marketing to estate agents via their media and professional body.
7. On 14 February, the LS briefed 55 local law society representatives on the Law Society HIP and demonstrated the Law Society HIP pack. Delegates commented that they were reassured by the work the Society was doing to provide a solution for conveyancing practitioners.
8. The current series of HIP roadshows will feature some 25 events between January and May and will have addressed almost 2000 practitioners. A second series in the late spring and early summer will also target estate agents and local solicitor/agent networks. The President has been invited to speak at the National Association of Estate Agents' annual conference in May and will continue to give interviews in the legal and relevant stakeholder press.
9. A targeted PR campaign will be developed to publicise the Law Society HIP in the estate agents' trade press and in the regional press. This will be designed

to coincide with the ODPM consumer awareness campaign scheduled to commence in the autumn.

10. A dry-run of the Society pack will be carried out with members of the Taskforce at the beginning of April, with the intention of running an open pilot from mid-May for firms which have registered their interest with the Law Society. This approach is in line with the ODPM's proposal that there should be a dry-run led by the pack providers on a geographical basis from June.
11. Overall reaction to the approach being taken by the Society is favourable, as evidenced by feedback from events, correspondence to the President and by the continuing growth in on-line registrations of interest which now approach 3,000.

# Annex A

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 10.30AM 16/03/06**  
**Home Information Pack Programme**  
**Indicative Timeline as at March 2006**



Key: ◆ Programme Miles    Ongoing activity

## Annex B

### Robust dry run needed for HIPs

Thursday 16 March 2006

Following the publication by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) of a timeline leading to the implementation of [Home Information Packs](#) (HIPs) on 1 June 2007, [Kevin Martin](#), Law Society president, says:

"It is encouraging that the government have listened to our call for a robust dry run, but the timeline leaves very little scope for that process. The industry and consumers need to be sure that the benefits that the government claims will be delivered and that the timetable allows any problems in the process to be rectified."

"Concerns remain about the training and regulation of Home Inspectors. The decision to go for multiple certification schemes will require a strong regulatory regime to ensure consistency and high standards for consumer protection."

"The government says there are benefits for first-time buyers who are not involved in a chain. One group which will be disadvantaged by the introduction of HIPs is the growing elderly population, who are often forced to sell to move into sheltered accommodation and pay for care. They will therefore have to pay for full packs, but have no hope of ever seeing any benefit."

"The Law Society will continue to voice its concerns to the ODPM in the lead-up to the launch of HIPs and to influence the way in which the scheme will operate in the interests both of the solicitor and the consumer."

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The Law Society regulates and represents the solicitors' profession in England and Wales and has a public interest role in working for reform of the law.

**For more information, call the Law Society Press Office on 020 7320 5811.**

