

The facts behind

# conveyancing

Solicitor **Jacqueline Emmerson** takes time out to dispel a few myths about one of the most misunderstood legal hoops house hunters face

**C**onveyancing – it's only signing some forms, isn't it? As the owner of Emmersons Solicitors, my conveyancing team are involved on a daily basis with clients, lenders and estate agents buying and selling properties. We've found that many customers do not understand the conveyancing process, what exactly they are paying for and how long it should take.

My own view is that for a client to be satisfied with their conveyancer, they should know more about what they do. In many cases, I have spoken to people who believe that all a solicitor has to do is produce the documents for signature and transfer the money. This is not the case.

Take the recent example of Paul and Sandra, who were thrilled to have an offer on their dream property accepted.

After being advised by my practice to carry out a survey, the couple found the house needed £20,000 worth of repairs. After reducing their offer by that amount,

they were contacted by an angry estate agent who seemed hell bent on making sure the house did not sell for the revised sum.

We contacted the seller's solicitor, pointing out that the owners would have the same problems if they tried to sell the property to someone else at the higher price. They subsequently accepted Paul and Sandra's offer.

Client satisfaction is a must

## Potential pitfalls

Customers often ask how long the conveyancing process takes. While our stock answer is that it should be over within six weeks, it is often difficult to know with precision.

There are many issues to consider. They include the kind of mortgage offer, whether it is already being processed by the lender and whether it has any special conditions. Problems with land covenants, the type of holding and the clients themselves are also common.

To get the best out of your solicitor, remember that you are the customer. Do not be afraid to ask questions.

It's not all bad news and foreboding, however. The scrapping of Home Information Packs (HIPs) by the new Government should make things easier for solicitors and clients alike.

We always felt that HIPs were badly organised and slowed down the conveyancing process, not to mention adding an extra cost. With this removed, sellers should be more inclined to dip their toes in the water and more properties should appear on the market.

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