



Solicitors
Regulation
Authority

Consumers and conveyancing

Attitudes towards using solicitors for conveyancing services

July 2009

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A research study into attitudes toward using solicitors for conveyancing services

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Consumer research study

Who we are

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) is an independent body that regulates over 100,000 solicitors and the firms in which they work in England and Wales. We operate as part of the Law Society but are separate from the representative body.

Our purpose is to protect the public:

- by ensuring that solicitors meet high standards; and
- by acting when risks are identified

The solicitors' profession includes single-solicitor practices and huge firms with a global presence and thousands of lawyers. Solicitors also work in the justice system, in government and within companies. All solicitors follow the same professional principles and code of conduct. We provide advice to help them do so.


Our strategy is to set, promote and secure in the public interest standards of behaviour and professional performance necessary to ensure clients receive good service, and that the rule of law is upheld.

What we wanted to find out

We act in the public interest, and one of our key objectives is to provide information to consumers, to support people when they make decisions about legal services. In 2008 we launched a programme of work to help us achieve this, and understand the information and support people need and when they need it.

A key focus of this work is on researching people's experiences of accessing legal services and using solicitors. This helps us to understand whether people are receiving the standards of service they are entitled to when accessing legal services.

One of the first areas we decided to explore was consumer experiences of using solicitors for residential conveyancing services.



Why look specifically at conveyancing?

We decided to carry out research into conveyancing firstly because it is the most commonly used legal service by consumers in England and Wales. Our most recent consumer research study shows that 21% of all people using solicitors in the last five years did so because they required conveyancing services (you can find this study on our website at www.sra.org.uk/consumer-research).

Complaints about solicitors and residential conveyancing services account for almost a quarter of all complaints received by the Legal Complaints Service, some of which require the SRA to investigate. We need to understand the issues people face when using solicitors for conveyancing services in order to support our work in this area.

In the future we aim also to carry out research into consumer experiences of accessing other legal services.



What is residential conveyancing?

The term conveyancing is used to refer to all the legal and administrative work which people might need when buying or selling property, or when re-mortgaging an existing property. Many people turn to solicitors for these services.

What we are doing with the results

This summary document is being published on our website alongside ComRes's full report. On Comres's website – www.comres.co.uk – you can find the information tables used in the study.

The results are being used to develop our work around supporting and protecting consumers - in particular toward achieving our key objective of providing information to help consumers make decisions about legal services, and understand the standards they should expect from their solicitor.

In particular, we will be using the results to inform our work around how we communicate to our stakeholders, and strengthen our understanding of the information and support people require when accessing and using legal services. This will feed in to our ongoing programme of work in this area.

What questions were asked?

The questions we asked looked at a number of different issues associated with conveyancing services, including:

- how satisfied people are with the performance of their solicitor
- how people feel about being referred to a particular solicitor by other parties within the conveyancing process
- standards of service offered to people having to sell property out of financial necessity.

All the questions we asked can be found on pages 2 and 3 of ComRes's full research report. This is available from our website www.sra.org.uk.

Use of information

The methodology section of ComRes's full report (available at www.sra.org.uk) sets out the circumstances for the use of the information found in the research study.



The key findings

Please note – this document summarises some of the key findings from our research. More detailed information on these and other findings are in ComRes's full report, available on our website - www.sra.org.uk.

Experiences of using solicitors for conveyancing services

How many people use solicitors for conveyancing services?

- 21% of the public have used a solicitor for conveyancing work in the past 5 years.
- 42% of these people were buying a property, whilst 9% were selling. A further 27% were involved in property chains (ie both buying and selling), with the remaining 22% looking to re-mortgage their existing property.

Are people satisfied with their conveyancing solicitor?

- 93% of people using solicitors for conveyancing services feel satisfied with the performance they receive their solicitor. Reasons given for this satisfaction include where solicitors had kept people well-informed about the different stages of the conveyancing process, and where they completed the conveyancing work quickly.

How do people find a solicitor when they need conveyancing services?

- 27% of those recently using a solicitor for conveyancing services used one they used before, whilst a further 24% used one recommended to them by an acquaintance.
- 12% meanwhile used a solicitor that had been recommended to them by their estate agent.

Would people use the same solicitor again for conveyancing services?

- 81% of people who have recently used a solicitor for conveyancing services say they would use that same solicitor again in the future.





Opinions on using solicitors for conveyancing services

What are people looking for in their conveyancing solicitor?

- Using a conveyancing solicitor that has been recommended by someone, and using a solicitor that specialises in conveyancing, are both seen as more important to the public than other factors such as using the one that provides the cheapest quote.

Are people happy to use solicitors recommended to them?

- Overall 40% of the public disagree that they would use a solicitor for conveyancing services that had been recommended to them by their estate agent.
- This increases to 50% of the public, if they knew the solicitor had paid the estate agent money for the recommendation.
- Of those that would consider using a solicitor recommended by their estate agent, the most popular reason given for this was that it would save them time in searching for one elsewhere.

What services would people most value from their solicitor if they had to sell a property out of financial necessity?

- The most valued services solicitors could provide to people looking to sell quickly out of financial need are completing the conveyancing work quickly, and being sympathetic toward the reasons prompting the quick sale.
- However people would also place importance on their solicitor clearly explaining to them any other options available to them, besides selling the property.

What do people look for in their conveyancing solicitor?

- 25% of the public believe the most important quality is for the solicitor to be able to demonstrate local knowledge of the property being bought/sold/remortgaged.
- 48% of the public believe the most important factor is prior knowledge of a solicitor, and they would use one they had used before.

More information

You can find more findings and detailed information in ComRes's full report on our website - www.sra.org.uk, and the data tables for the study can be found on ComRes's website – www.comres.co.uk.

If you would like any further information on the findings of this research study, please get in touch:

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