



## New Code of Practice for Property Sector

RICS and TPO announced the appointment of Baroness Dianne Hayter as the Chair of a new independent steering group on 1<sup>st</sup> July.

The new Code of Practice Steering Group will develop an overarching code of conduct for residential property agents following the Lord Best *'Regulation of Property Agents Working Group, Final Report, July 2019'* which made a number of recommendations to protect consumers.

The recommendations in the Lord Best report included the development of a single, high-level set of principles as a code that would be applicable to all residential property agents, along with the establishment of a new Regulator and mandatory qualifications for practitioners.

The new code being developed by the steering group will cover all aspects of residential property. In addition to a high level set of principles, there will also be a number of other more detailed sections developed that are specific to various aspects of the residential property agent sector, such as sales, lettings and management. The Code is being prepared so that it can be "handed over" to the new Regulator once established.

The Steering Group, made up of consumer and sector representatives, will work collaboratively and in the public interest, and those participating in the group do so voluntarily, in good faith. As it moves forward there will be opportunity for further consumer and sector input, and the Steering Group will address any gaps. The draft will go out for consultation this month, when feedback from users, professionals, buyers, sellers, lenders, tenants and landlords will be sought.

The Steering Group is committed to change and will work alongside Government to implement the recommendations outlined in Lord Best's review.

Baroness Hayter brings a wealth of experience to the role of Chair, including as Chair of the Legal Services Consumer Panel, Vice Chair of the Financial Services Consumer Panel and a member of the National Consumer Council. Baroness Hayter also chaired the Property Standards Board.

Baroness Hayter said "The forthcoming combined code will ensure that Consumers are clear what standards they should expect from property professionals, and it will enable them to be confident that all Residential Property Agents will be held to account in meeting them.

"The independent Steering Group is undertaking this work to prepare an over-arching Code of Practice for the new Regulator, very much within the public interest. With both consumer representatives and cross-sector support and commitment to achieving this goal of a combined code, as proposed in the Regulation of Property Agents Report, it will raise standards and trust in the industry."

RICS and The Property Ombudsman Service (TPO) publish the two principal existing codes in sales and lettings ('The Blue Book' and the TPO Sales and Lettings Codes respectively), they will be working together with supporting partners, to develop a new, consolidated residential agency and management code. This will incorporate 'best in class' existing material in sales, lettings and residential management (including documents such as the *Residential Service Charge Code* which is endorsed by the Secretary of State).

For leasehold retirement housing the statutory Code of Practice is published by the Association of Retirement Housing Managers (ARHM).

The Steering Group will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that a new overarching Property Code is developed based on the 14 core principles (plus responsibility to disclose any information that could threaten resident's safety) as set out in the *Regulation of Property Agents Working Group, Final Report, July 2019'*.
- Working with the sector to develop sector chapters of the new overarching Property Code, achieving the widest possible representation within each sector.
- Developing a clear timetable for revising the overarching Property Code to keep it up to date, consulting appropriately with consumers and agents when considering or proposing revisions.

**The group consists of the following individuals representing a wide range of organisations**

Name	Organisation
Andrew Bulmer	IRPM
Alison Farrar	Trading Standards
Anthony Essien	LEASE
Cecilia Brodigan	AHRM
Chris Norris	NRLA
Dallas Banfield	First Tier Tribunal
David Cox	ARLA
Dianne Hayter	Lords (Chair)
Officials	MHCLG
Isobel Thomson	Safeagents
Katrine Sporle	TPO
Liz Owen	
Mairead Carroll	RICS
Mark Hayward	NAEA
Nigel Glen	ARMA
Peter Habert	TPO
Tim Frome	PRS
Steve Harriot	TDS
Vivienne Sugar	