



SHIP RESPONDS TO WHICH? MYSTERY SHOPPING EXERCISE

ANDREA ROZARIO, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF SHIP – THE UK’S LEADING PROFESSIONAL BODY FOR EQUITY RELEASE PRODUCT PROVIDERS – COMMENTS ON WHICH?’S EQUITY RELEASE MYSTERY SHOPPING EXERCISE:

“WE BELIEVE THAT WHEN YOU LOOK AT THIS PIECE OF RESEARCH, YOU NEED TO LOOK AT WHAT HAS BEEN EXCLUDED AS WELL AS WHAT HAS BEEN INCLUDED. WHICH? HAS CRITICISED THE PROCESS FOR ADVICE, BUT NOT THE ACTUAL FUNDAMENTAL OUTCOME OF THAT ADVICE, NOR THE PRODUCTS THEMSELVES. THIS IS A STEP FORWARD FROM LAST YEAR WHEN THEY BRANDED EQUITY RELEASE A ‘PRODUCT OF LAST RESORT’.

“BUT CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IS NEEDED. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE ESTIMATED TO BE OVER 7000 PEOPLE WHO HAVE TAKEN THE SPECIALIST EQUITY RELEASE EXAMS, THE FACT THAT WHICH? HAS FOUND ISSUES WITH THE PROCESSES OF SOME OF THE 40 ADVISERS REVIEWED SHOWS THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY. ADVICE IS A CRUCIAL STEP IN THE EQUITY RELEASE PROCESS - AND WITH EACH CLIENT’S NEEDS BEING HIGHLY INDIVIDUAL AND UNIQUE - ONE THAT SHOULD BE CLOSELY MONITORED TO ENSURE CONSUMERS ARE GETTING THE BEST HELP POSSIBLE.

“WE KNOW THAT THE SPECIALIST ADVISERS ARE ACUTELY CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED FOR HIGH STANDARDS, AND THAT MANY MORE GENERALIST ADVISERS ARE LOOKING MORE AND MORE CLOSELY AT EQUITY RELEASE, AND COMPLETING THE SPECIALIST QUALIFICATIONS. WE BELIEVE THAT MANY OF THE SHORTFALLS THAT WHICH? HAVE FOUND COULD BE DUE TO THE PROCESS OF EXPLAINING THE PRODUCT RATHER THAN TO SIGNIFICANT GAPS IN ADVISERS’ KNOWLEDGE.



“WE TAKE ADDITIONAL STEPS TO ENSURE THAT ALL CONSUMERS WHO USE SHIP PRODUCTS HAVE EXTRA PROTECTION BY INSISTING THAT THEY GET INDEPENDENT LEGAL ADVICE AS PART OF THE PURCHASE PROCESS. THIS DOES NOT DIMINISH THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ADVISERS’ ROLE BUT ADDS ANOTHER CONSUMER SAFEGUARD.

“HOWEVER - THAT SAID - THERE ARE OBVIOUSLY STILL IMPROVEMENTS THAT COULD BE MADE TO THE ADVICE PROCESS AND ANY ADVISERS WHO ARE PRACTISING IN THIS ARENA BUT ARE NOT CONFIDENT IN THEIR SKILLS SHOULD TAKE ACTION IMMEDIATELY. THEY CAN SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE THE STANDARD OF ADVICE THEY OFFER CLIENTS BY TAKING STEPS SUCH AS LOOKING AT THE SUPPORT OFFERED TO ADVISERS FROM PROVIDERS, WORKING WITH SPECIALIST ADVISERS, APPROACHING THEIR INDIVIDUAL TRADE BODIES FOR HELP OR REVIEWING THE SHIP ADVISER CHECKLIST.

“SHIP IS COMMITTED TO GROWING AND DEVELOPING THIS MARKET AND IS DUE TO LAUNCH A DISCUSSION PAPER NEXT WEEK WHICH WILL LOOK TO PROVOKE DEBATE AROUND THE BARRIERS TO GROWTH THAT THIS MARKET IS FACING.”

- ENDS -

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About SHIP Equity Release:

SAFE HOME INCOME PLANS (SHIP) IS THE UK’S LEADING PROFESSIONAL BODY FOR EQUITY RELEASE PRODUCT PROVIDERS. LAUNCHED IN 1991 TO PROMOTE SAFE PLANS, SHIP IS DEDICATED TO THE PROTECTION OF THE PLANHOLDER AND THE SAFE GROWTH OF THE INDUSTRY. SHIP REPRESENTS APPROXIMATELY 90% OF THE