



## Press Release

### **CLC licenses first 'ABS' law firm on 6 October**

The Council for Licensed Conveyancers will license externally-owned and managed law firms in England and Wales from 6 October 2011.

The date marks a change in the way consumers are able to purchase legal services, with new 'Alternative Business Structure' (ABS) firms set to enter the market for the first time. ABS is the most radical aspect of the Legal Services Act 2007 which aimed to liberalise the legal services market by providing increased choice for consumers. Because ABS allows non-lawyers to own law firms, legal services can be offered alongside related services such as estate agency, providing a 'one-stop shop' for consumers. The CLC is currently the only Approved Regulator to be designated a Licensing Authority for these new entities.

On the same day, the CLC will implement its new outcomes-focussed approach to regulation, designed to enhance consumer protection and prevent 'box ticking'. Regulated bodies will be required to demonstrate that they:

- act with independence and integrity
- maintain high standards of work
- act in the best interest of clients
- deal with regulators and ombudsmen in an open and cooperative way
- promote ease of access and service

CLC Chief Executive Victor Olowe said: "We have over 20 years' experience in regulating the licensed conveyancing profession and we will be extending the same rigorous but proportionate approach to the regulation of ABS. We are very proud to be the first Licensing Authority designated by Parliament to regulate these new business structures.

“We believe that ABS is good news for consumers. Opening up the market will offer people a greater choice of legal service provider, while at the same time our new risk-based and outcomes-focussed approach to regulation will help ensure high standards of service and will maximise consumer protection.”

Chris Kenny, Chief Executive of the Legal Services Board, said: “The LSB congratulates the Council for Licensed Conveyancers (CLC) on becoming able to license Alternative Business Structures (ABS). Today we see the first ABS emerge in the market and this will begin to widen the offer available to consumers of legal services. We look forward to working with the CLC as they continue to consider licence applications.”

Ends

**Notes for editors:**

1. For further information or to request an interview please contact Jo O’Driscoll on 07802 181249 email [joo@clc-uk.org](mailto:joo@clc-uk.org), or David Gladwin on 01245 349599 email [davidg@clc-uk.org](mailto:davidg@clc-uk.org).
2. CLC, or Council for Licensed Conveyancers, is the regulatory body for licensed conveyancers in England and Wales. Our role is to safeguard the public interest and consumers by regulating providers to deliver high quality and accessible legal services.
3. The Legal Services Board announced that it had approved the CLC’s application to regulate ABSs in May 2011. An Order was made by the Lord Chancellor designating the CLC as a Licensing Authority in August 2011.
4. The CLC has 10 years’ existing experience in regulating a form of ABS, with over 40 Recognised Bodies whose owners/managers are non-lawyers.
5. Entities interested in applying to CLC to be regulated as an Alternative Business Structure can find the application form on a dedicated section of CLC’s website: [http://www.clc-uk.org/outcomes\\_regulation.php](http://www.clc-uk.org/outcomes_regulation.php)