

## HIPs are working

### PIONEERING PENSIONERS BACK PACK TO GET THEM ON THE MOVE

#### **Pensioners John and Vera Rouse aren't afraid of trying new things.**

The couple celebrated their first wedding anniversary yesterday after tying the knot at the ages of 67 and 81 respectively. Now they're about to buy their first home together – and put the Government's new home information pack (HIP) to the test. The controversial scheme is being piloted in the north east ahead of its official launch in June.

Mr Rouse, who popped the question as he and his wife abseiled the Baltic in Gateshead for charity, moved into her home afterwards, so their next house will be the first property they have chosen together. They are looking to move to a larger, three-bedroom house, so he can have a study.

Mrs Rouse, of Harton Rise, South Shields, said: "We've got our house up for sale with Pattinson and they asked if we would mind helping launch the HIP. "We didn't like to say no, especially if it helps people. It is up to everybody to help each other, isn't it? And if it helps us to sell our house, why not?"

From next summer, every homeowner will be obliged to obtain a HIP if they want to put their property on the market. It will contain details buyers need to know, including title information, search reports and an assessment of the physical condition of the property. The scheme aims to make the home-buying process quicker and more transparent and avoid money being wasted from sales collapsing at the last minute.

Housing Minister Yvette Cooper said: "HIPs can make a real difference to home buyers and sellers, particularly by giving them proper energy efficiency information about their homes for the first time. The trials are a chance to properly test HIPs to make sure consumers get the best possible product."

Mr Rouse, secretary of the bowls club at Jack Clark Park, where the couple met, said: "If the pack had been around the last time I bought a house, it would have saved a lot of time. Having all the property information available in one place can only make buying a house quicker and less stressful."

HIPs are being piloted free of charge in six areas nationwide.