



Reducing the risk of property fraud

The amount of money involved in any single property transaction makes this an attractive target for fraudsters, and newspapers have been reporting that a growing number of innocent families have fallen victim to online fraud and lost significant sums of money.

We are very aware of this risk, and to ensure that this does not happen to any of our clients we take a number of key steps. Some of our actions may seem a little bureaucratic, but we hope you will agree that it is better to be safe than sorry.

Risk indicators

Fraudsters are always on the lookout for weakness, so a transaction may be more vulnerable to fraud if:

- your identity has been stolen;
- your property is rented out to strangers (are you rigorous about identity checks?);
- the property is empty because its owner is in care or has died recently;
- you live away or overseas;
- the property is not mortgaged; or
- the property is not registered with the Land Registry.

Reducing risk with the help of the Land Registry

To reduce the risk of any property being fraudulently sold or mortgaged, we recommend the following:

- Check that your property is registered with the Land Registry. If you bought it or mortgaged it since 1998, it should be registered. If you are unsure, ask our property team to double check this.
- It is important to keep your contact details with the Land Registry up to date, for example if you change your name or move let out your original home.
- Sign up for the free* property alert service from the Land Registry – this includes an option to receive a notice if anyone applies to change the register of your property. Although this will not put an automatic block on any changes to the register, it will warn you and you can take action speedily. *If you own more than 10 properties in England and Wales, there will be a fee for this service.
- Stop the Land Registry registering a sale or mortgage on your property unless a solicitor verifies that the application was genuine by putting a restriction on your property title.





Beware email fraud

Fraudsters have become adept at impersonating law firms, copying branded letterheads and email templates and even cloning whole websites.

The great thing about working with a local firm of our size is that you can meet your solicitor and get to know them personally.

Even so, it pays to be aware of the sort of tricks that fraudsters are using, for example:

- An email sender's address does not exactly match our website address - you can roll your mouse pointer over the name of the sender to double check this.
- The email address of the sender is slightly different to the one used in previous emails that you have received – companies sometimes tweak their names in a rebrand, but it is worth double checking.
- The email address is from a lawyer that you have never heard of, or who does not appear on the team page of our website.
- Double check by phone with your solicitor if you receive an unexpected email asking for any personal or financial information.
- Do not allow anyone to push you into doing something immediately – unless you have been stressing that there is an urgent deadline to meet.
- Beware any email which is not addressed to you personally and uses a generic approach, such as "Dear customer".
- Watch out for hyperlinks to a bogus website – remember you can roll your mouse over the link to check the true destination URL.

Most importantly, protect your financial information

- NEVER give away your PIN number or your passwords;
- ONLY give personal or financial details to the solicitor you know at the time you expect to do so; and
- You are ALWAYS welcome at our offices if you prefer to keep things offline.

Money laundering info

Under the Money Laundering Regulations 2017, all solicitors have a duty to identify their clients and to verify their identity using basis of documents and information before starting to act for them. This is why, at Myers & Co Solicitors, we require all clients to produce identification to us. To guard against forged or counterfeit documents, we must be satisfied that any documents provided are original, and that photographs give a likeness of you. We use an electronic ID search to confirm your identity.

Our compliance Manager David Vaughan-Birch, says, When we ask you for ID, it does not mean that you are under suspicion, it just means that we are fulfilling our legal obligations by making sure that we are providing the safest and securest service possible.





We can only accept one form of ID for each proof of identity, which means that if you have used a document to prove your name, you cannot use the same document to prove your address.

All of our client care packs provide you with the details of examples of suitable documentary ID evidence, but for clarity they are also listed below; we need one item from List A and one item from List B.

List A: evidence of name for UK resident individuals

- a current signed passport;
- a current EEA member state identity card (which can also be used as evidence of address if it gives this);
- a cheque drawn on an account in your name with a bank in the UK or EEA;
- a residence permit issued by Home Office to EEA nationals;
- a current UK or EEA photo-card driving licence;
- a current bus ID card
- a benefit book or original notification letter from the Benefits Agency confirming the right to benefits;
- a photographic registration card for self-employed individuals and partnerships in the construction industry C1S4;
- a firearms or shotgun certificate;
- a national identity card containing your photograph; or
- a birth certificate.

List B: evidence of address for UK resident individuals

- confirmation from an electoral register search that a person of that name lives at that address;
- a recent utility bill or statement (dated within 3 months), or a certificate from a utilities supplier confirming an arrangement to pay for services on pre-payment terms (we do not accept mobile telephone bills which can be sent to different addresses);
- a local council tax bill for the current year;
- a bank, building society or credit union statement or passbook containing current address;
- an original mortgage statement (dated within 3 months) from a recognised lender;
- local council or housing association rent card or tenancy agreement;
- benefit book or original notification letter from the Benefits Agency confirming the right to benefits;
- a current EEA member state identity card;
- an HMRC self-assessment statement or tax demand; or
- a house or motor insurance certificate.

