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SOLICITORS LLP

## Tips on how to avoid Property Fraud and Email Hacking

The legal community has been aware of these issues for some time now and the majority of firms drum it into their employees that no matter how safe the firm's property firewalls/anti-virus or spam filters are, those of the public will probably be less so.

Here are a few pointers:

- If you receive the solicitor/conveyancer firm's bank details by email, and don't also receive the same details by post, phone the firm to make sure they are correct (using a verified landline telephone number).
- Do not send your bank details by email (to anyone), either phone them through, send them by post, or take them in.
- Make sure the firm acting for you is genuine by checking with the lists compiled by the Law Society or the Council for Licensed Conveyancers. Carry out a law firm search via the Solicitors Regulation Authority website.
- Read anything sent to you by your conveyancers carefully. Many firms provide clients with their bank details at the outset (by post) and stress that those details will not change.
- If you are being pushed to proceed very quickly be careful, fraudsters often use this tactic so that emails are used and corners are cut.
- If you are buying an empty or tenanted property, tell your conveyancer.
- If you have to send sensitive information by email do not give a clue to what that information might be in the email's subject line.
- Do not post any updates on social media as to the progress of your transaction – this is how some fraudsters identify when to send the scam email requesting your money.
- Working with your conveyancer is a two way street. No matter how good and safe they are, if you are not as vigilant you may end up having your emails hacked or becoming involved in property fraud.
- Above all, remember that buying or selling a property is one of the most important and complicated things you will ever do. Do not instruct the cheapest firm to act for you. Visit the firm if possible. Certainly speak to the person who will be handling your transaction (or the Head of Department or Team Leader) and make sure you feel confident in them and their ability.

**May 2016**

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