

Buying a property

The conveyancing process simplified

Under normal circumstances buying property can be very stressful, so the last thing you need is the conveyancing process to add to your worries. Our service is designed to eliminate complications for you making the move as stress-free as possible.

In simple terms, we take care of the whole conveyancing process of your purchase, speaking directly with your financial advisers, mortgage providers estate agents and builders (where appropriate) to take the hassle from you and speed things along.

It's our job to manage the process for you. Just take a look at our step-by-step guide, to see what we do for you, and when you'll need to be involved – then leave the rest to us.

This is how we simplify your purchase process

- Check the contract
- Undertake important checks through searches
- Ask your seller some questions
- Survey the property
- Check your mortgage offer & prepare the paperwork
- Sign your contracts
- Exchange contracts with the seller
- Prepare the paperwork to buy
- Complete your purchase
- Register everything in your name

To help you understand what happens at each stage we've prepared this simple guide – see over the page for more.

Check the contract

The Seller's lawyers will provide us with a draft contract together with an Information Pack and copies of the relevant deeds. We inspect the documents to make sure the Seller owns the property and has the right to sell – all of which is designed to get you off to a flying start.

Undertake important checks through searches

For the fees quoted in advance, we carry out the initial searches you need including:

- **Local searches** to check for any Local Authority issues relating to the property – such as compulsory purchase orders, financial charges, road maintenance and planning applications.
- **Drainage** – to check whether the property you are buying is connected to mains water and drainage along with the routes of the pipes and any other related issues.
- **Environmental search** – to check for any environmental issues – such as flooding, coal mining, contamination or land fill – affecting the property you are buying.
- **Parish liability search** – to check you are not buying a property with a heavy legal obligation to upkeep a church.

We will also advise on other specialist searches that may be required, such as mining searches (if the property is in a current or historical mining area) or a company search if your purchase involves a small developer/builder or management company.

Ask your seller some questions

The information provided by the Seller's lawyers (see above) will include details of boundary ownership and contents included in the sale along with any disputes, services and guarantees relating to the property. We review this information, along with the Contract, deeds, search reports, mortgage offer and valuation report and raise any questions arising with the Seller's lawyers. At this stage, it's a good idea to let us have any specific questions that you would like to raise. Please feel free to chat these through with us first if needed.

Check your mortgage offer & prepare the paperwork

By this stage you should have made your mortgage arrangements, although if you require help just let us know. We should receive a copy of your mortgage offer at the same time as you and will deal with any special conditions raised by your bank, building society or lender.

We check all the paperwork before advising you and your mortgage provider of anything you should be aware of and then send a Mortgage Deed for you to sign and return. By getting this signed and witnessed, we can be sure to be ready to complete the purchase promptly.

Survey the property

We strongly recommend you have the property professionally surveyed before committing to buy, whether or not you are taking out a mortgage. A good general survey can be obtained from a Chartered Surveyor, and you can choose either a 'Home Buyer's Report' or a more detailed (and expensive) 'Full Structural Survey'. Above all else, please remember that a mortgage valuation is no substitute for a survey, which can save you a lot of money and hassle in the long run.

Sign your contracts

As soon as we have the information we send you written reports covering the results of your searches, legal contract, lease (where the property is leasehold), your mortgage and Stamp Duty Land Tax. You then sign and return the contract ready for exchange. At this stage, you pay a deposit, which is normally 10% of the purchase price although smaller sums are sometimes negotiated. It is important to remember that you will have to pay 10% of the purchase price if you do not complete the property purchase after exchange of contracts (as explained below).

Exchange contracts with the seller

When the above steps are complete you can exchange contracts once building insurance for the new property is in place and a completion date has been agreed with all other parties in the chain (if any). The date for completion (i.e. when you actually move) is usually a week or two later.

Exchange usually involves a phone call with the Seller's solicitors and you do not need to be present. However, it is now safe to make arrangements such as removal vans, re-directing post, phone and other services.

Prepare the paperwork to buy

Our next step is the preparation of a Transfer Deed that is sent to the Seller's lawyers, for signature in good time for completion. This is the legal document that transfers ownership of the property to you on completion.

We also complete and send you a Stamp Duty Land Transaction Return for you to sign and return before completion – this form has to be signed by all buyers whether or not Stamp Duty is payable.

Where a mortgage is involved, we send a Certificate of Title to your bank, building society or lender to request the money. In doing so, we confirm that the property is acceptable as security for their loan and ensure the necessary funds arrive the day before completion.

There are a few routine things to do before completion including a Land Registry search and bankruptcy search for you where a mortgage is involved. Finally, we send a completion statement showing the amount of money needed to complete. As we need cleared funds in our bank account to complete the purchase we ask you to supply the balance amount (after taking account of the proceeds of any sale and money received from your mortgage provider) the day before completion.

Complete your purchase

On the morning of completion, once we have received monies from you, your lender and the proceeds from any property sales, we will transfer the money needed to complete to the bank account of the Seller's lawyers.

Once this is done the sale is completed and the property belongs to you.

It is usual for the Seller to remove all their belongings from the property by lunchtime on the day of completion and arrangements made to handover the keys, typically via the estate agents.

If there is a chain involved the whole process may take longer and it could be late afternoon before all the money arrives and all keys are released.

Register everything in your name

As a final step, we submit the Stamp Duty Land Tax Form you signed to HM Revenue & Customs (the Inland Revenue). The amount of Stamp Duty you pay to the Government depends on the purchase price, we advise you of this amount at the start. Special rules apply for new leases, Shared Ownership schemes and properties located in disadvantaged areas.

After dealing with any Stamp Duty that is payable, we register the change of ownership of the property into your name with the Land Registry. The title deeds are then either forwarded to you or your mortgage provider, with a copy to you in either case.