



COVID-19 Briefing: Reopening the Housing Market

The property market has been stalled since the lockdown restrictions were introduced with more than 450,000 people unable to progress their property transaction.

Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick has announced that as of the 13th May, buyers and renters in England wishing to move home can do so, provided they follow Government guidance and social distancing advice.

WHAT IS ALLOWED?

From Wednesday 13th May, estate agents, surveyors and removals firms are allowed to reopen and visit sites where they had previously been prevented from doing so.

This should help to move forward any property sales that had been held up. Buyers and renters will also be able to complete their purchases and start visiting properties for viewings.

STAYING SAFE

It has been stressed that this is not a return to normal and everyone involved in a property transaction, from buyers to sellers, from estate agents to solicitors must stay at least 2 metres apart from people who are not members of their household and should wash their hands regularly.

As well as following social distancing guidelines, new practices and procedures will need to be bought in to help limit the spread of COVID-19 as much as is possible. These will include:

- **Doing more of the house buying process online**
- **Arranging virtual viewings wherever possible**
- **Vacating your property whilst people are being shown around**
- **Leaving doors open when vacating a property for a viewing**

- **Not touching surfaces while viewing a property**
- **Thoroughly cleaning a property before someone else moves in**

PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM CORONAVIRUS AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Regardless of whether the market is open or not, if any party in a property transaction develops symptoms of coronavirus or tests positive, they should delay their move until every member of their household comes to the end of their self-isolation period.

Communication is important here, most people will be understanding of your situation, so it is sensible to come to amicable agreements with others in the chain to delay moving dates until it is safe for you to do so. Make your solicitor or conveyancer aware of your situation as soon as you are able.

Vulnerable people should balance their need to move home against the increased risk they would be putting themselves under by moving house during periods where they have an increased risk of contracting coronavirus.

As with those suffering from coronavirus, people who are vulnerable or shielding should communicate with others in the chain to advise them of your circumstances. Most people will be understanding of your circumstances.

RESTARTING YOUR PROPERTY TRANSACTION

As the property market has reopened, we are aware that many people who were in the middle of a property transaction will be eager to pick up where they left off. However, it is important for anyone involved in a property transaction to understand that we are not returning to normal, property transactions will be very different while coronavirus remains a risk.

Civil

Commercial

Conveyancing

Family

Probate

The conveyancing department at Fraser Dawbarns are committed to keeping our clients and our staff safe so we will be adopting several measures to minimise the risk for everyone involved.

Remote Working

Conveyancing is one of the legal services best suited to remote working. Fraser Dawbarns is well set up to handle a property transaction remotely via telephone, email, SMS messages and the post. Even before the lockdown, our conveyancers were able to manage a property transaction remotely from start to finish and we have been effectively managing existing transactions in this way since the lockdown began.

Safe Distancing

Despite our capacity to handle conveyancing transactions remotely, we are aware that some circumstances may arise where a face-to-face meeting with a client is unavoidable. Where a client meeting needs to take place, we will be putting appropriate social distancing and hygiene measures in place to protect the safety of clients and staff.

Flexibility

While there is a heightened risk of coronavirus transmission, it is important to have increased awareness of the danger to you and your family. That is why we will be advising our clients, even those who are ready to move, not to exchange contracts on an occupied property unless provisions have been made for the risks presented by the virus.

RESUMING NORMAL SERVICE

Even though the property market has been opened with immediate effect, it is worth being aware that the market will not be returning to normal immediately. Key players such as estate agents and surveyors will have furloughed staff and will need to recall them back to work.

As a number of transactions were put on hold when the lockdown was announced, this backlog will also have to be progressed, which may slow the process down for people looking to begin a new transaction, however we are working closely with agents to make the process as smooth as possible in the circumstances.

Restarting the housing market is a vital step in restarting the

economy and moving towards normal again, however it is vital to keep yourself and others safe and do everything possible to prevent a second wave of the virus which could potentially lead to further lockdowns.

PEACE OF MIND THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES

In uncertain times, the only thing we can say for certain is that nothing will stay the same for long.

It is entirely possible, therefore, that new legislation will have been introduced which will mean that all or part of this briefing no longer reflects the current law.

Because of this, we ask you to consider that, although correct at time of printing, information in this sheet may no longer be up to date and it is always best practice to consult with a lawyer about anything contained in this briefing.

Although our office doors are closed, our lawyers are still available to help answer any of your questions about this or any other legal concern you have.

Please contact Fraser Dawbarns directly for up-to-date information on your specific circumstances.

LOOK OUT FOR OUR OTHER COVID-19 BRIEFINGS

- [Life after Furlough](#)
- [The Three Month Ban on Evicting Tenants](#)
- [Making a Will Under Lockdown](#)
- [The Changing Face of Litigation](#)
- [Holding Company Meetings During Lockdown](#)
- [Commercial Tenancies and Rights of Forfeiture](#)
- [Commercial LPAs - Risk Management in Uncertain Times](#)
- [Debt Recovery Under Lockdown](#)
- [Child Contact and the Coronavirus Lockdown](#)
- [Coronavirus, Employment Law and Your Rights](#)



WE OFFER A WIDE RANGE OF LEGAL SERVICES TO OUR CLIENTS

Agricultural Law • Commercial and Corporate Law • Commercial Property • Family Law • Children Matters • Wills and Administration of Estates
Residential Conveyancing • Lifetime Planning and Wealth Management • Employment Law • Disputes • Lasting Powers of Attorney • Court of Protection