O'NEILL RICHMONDS
LAW FIRM LTD

Who we are and Price Transparency = Conveyancing, Probate and Debt Collection

Benton Office – Space Works, Benton Park Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE7 7LX

Staff

John O'Neill Director and Solicitor

John is our Senior Director. John obtained his degree from Northumbrian University in 1978 and qualified as a solicitor in 1981. John has nearly 40 years' experience in residential and commercial conveyancing, sales of businesses, company commercial, probate and trust matters.

John's hourly charge rate is £350 plus VAT.

Laura Mason Solicitor

Laura qualified as a solicitor in 2009, with a top north east firm where she specialised in all aspects of property matters, progressing to becoming a partner in the property department.
Laura brings a wealth of experience to the firm`s existing property department.

Laura`s hourly rate is £350 plus VAT

Kevin Johnson Solicitor and Head of Private Client

Kevin is a graduate of Dundee University and qualified as a Solicitor in 2004. He is a member of the Trust & Estate Practitioners Organisation.

Kevin is Head of our Private Department and specialises in dealing with the administration of estates, wills, powers of attorney, inheritance tax and estate planning.

Kevin's hourly rate is £350 plus VAT.

Sarah Ternent Apprentice Solicitor – Private Client

Sarah is on the route to qualifying as a Solicitor via the study and apprenticeship route. Due to qualify in 2028 Sarah is working directly with Kevin Johnson as both her mentor and supervisor.

Sarah`s hourly rate is £300 plus VAT.

Branch office – 31-34 Brenkley Way, Blezard Business Park, Seaton Burn, Newcastle upon Tyne NE13 6DS

Michael Baker **Director and Solicitor**

Michael qualified as a solicitor in 1969 having been articled to Mr. Lionel Lunn of Stanton Haswell & Croft. Upon qualifying Michael joined the firm of Richmonds and remained there throughout his professional career, becoming senior partner of that firm before the firm amalgamated with this practice. Michael specialises in domestic and commercial conveyancing matters, with a particular emphasis on commercial Landlord and Tenant work and sales of business.

Michael's hourly charge rate is £350 plus VAT.

Christine Lowes **Solicitor**

Christine obtained a BA Degree in Social Science & Psychology which was converted to Law Degree by undertaking the Common Professional Examination in 1983 followed by the Law Society Finals in 1984. This was followed by two years in Articles with Richmonds Solicitors in Newcastle upon Tyne. Qualified as a solicitor in 1986, Christine remained in the employment of Richmonds Solicitors after qualification and became a Partner in 1991. Christine continued as a Partner with Richmonds Solicitors until the amalgamation with O'Neill Robson Palmer in 2012.

As well as extensive experience of Residential Conveyancing, Christine has been the Legal Advisor to a Charitable Housing Association for 34 years providing assistance in connection with property sales, new-build development schemes, constitutional issues and Governance & Compliance matters.

She also has considerable experience in the field of Private Client Matters i.e. Wills, Probate, Trusts, and Lasting Powers of Attorney.

Christine's hourly charge rate is £350 plus VAT.

Victoria Chaplin **Conveyancer and team manager**

Victoria joined the firm in 2001 as a 16 year old fresh from secondary education. Her career has been largely focussed on residential property and in 2009 she received the Broad Chare Chambers prize for her achievement in her ILEX level 6 examinations.

Victoria specialises in all aspects of residential property transactions. She has a loyal client following who continue to refer new clients in her direction. She is very client focused and always seeks to achieve the best results for her clients and the conveyancing team.

Victoria's hourly rate is £300 plus VAT.

Karen Kynaston **Legal Professional**

Karen Kynaston is a Legal Professional in our private client department. She has over twenty years experience in private client work such as the preparation of wills, the administration of deceased person's estates and powers of attorney. Karen provides a sensitive and understanding ear to elderly clients and specialises in the lifetime management of their affairs. Karen works alongside and is directly supervised by Kevin Johnson and John O`Neill.

Karen's hourly rate is £290 plus VAT.

Costs and expectations - conveyancing

Purchase and sale of a Residential Property

Our fees cover all work generally required to complete the average purchase and sale of your new/existing home including dealing with the registration of the title at the Land Registry and payment of Stamp Duty Land Tax if the property is in England or Land Transaction Tax if the property you wish to purchase is in Wales.

Our fees are charged at the hourly chargeable rate of the staff member who is conducting the work on your behalf. As a general rule the average conveyancing transaction takes between three to six hours of a fee earner's time from start to finish. VAT on our charges will also be added at the current rate of 20%. The time spent will include drafting contracts, inspecting title, putting in hand searches, dealing with your mortgage and acting for your lender, completing the matter, paying any stamp duty land transaction tax and registering the transaction at the Land Registry.

Not every transaction is the same and further charges may apply in differing situations. For ease of budget and transparency we have opted to fix these charges which are detailed in the schedule below – Additional Standard Conveyancing Charges. It may be that some or none of these charges will apply to your transaction and we always recommend that a transaction is discussed with us at the outset, particularly, if there are time pressures on you such as an auction purchase or you are already aware of title issues such as a short lease, access problems or anything out of the ordinary. Our conveyancers have discretion to depart from their hourly charge in favour of a fixed fee in respect of legal charges and we would recommend that you call the office to discuss your needs and the individual circumstances of the transaction envisaged in order to ascertain if this is possible. The average conveyancing charge is between £1,500 and £1,800 plus VAT and disbursements (some of which will also be subject to VAT and details are given below in the disbursements section).

Additional Standard Conveyancing Charges

These charges will only apply if the following additional work arises in connection with your transaction if these elements were not anticipated or known about, and so not accounted for in the fees estimate given at the outset

Transactions which need to be effected by a Power of Attorney whether yours or by another party to the transaction.	£150.00 plus VAT
Cases where a Second or additional Mortgage needs to be arranged	£75.00 plus VAT per mortgage

Correcting a Minor Defective Title	£150.00 plus VAT
Correcting a Defective Title for example a defective Lease	Conveyancer`s hourly fee will apply plus VAT
Application for First Registration	£200.00 plus VAT
Transfer of Equity or Appointment of New Trustee	£200.00 plus VAT
Arranging Title Insurance to cover of lack of Building Regulation Approval, lack of Planning Permission, lack of consent under Restrictive Covenants or similar Title Insurance arrangements	£100.00 plus VAT
Charge for any Statutory Declaration, found to be necessary. (excluding statutory Oath fee payable to Notary)	Conveyancer`1s hourly rate will apply, plus VAT
Property Visits or Site Inspections (within 10 miles)	£100.00 plus VAT
New Build Property	£200.00 plus VAT
Unregistered land	£200.00 plus VAT
Leasehold Property	£100.00 plus VAT
Leasehold Flat within a block and run by management company.	£250.00 plus VAT
Shared Ownership	£450.00 plus VAT
Purchase of Freehold title to allow sale of Leasehold Property / Obtaining extension to Lease term	£250.00 plus VAT
Paying off Vendors Creditors	£50.00 plus VAT per account
Charge where Contract Race involved	£150.00 plus VAT
Deed of Postponement	£150.00 plus VAT
Obtaining copies of missing documents which clients are unable to supply	Minimum of £20.00 plus VAT
Location of Missing Title Deeds	£50.00 plus VAT
Deeds handling fee	£30.00 plus VAT
Sending more than one cheque to distribute funds	£20.00 plus VAT per cheque
Certification of Documents	£10.00 plus VAT
Accepting payments by debit card	£5.00 plus VAT
Accepting payments by credit card	2% per transaction
Gifted deposit	£50.00 plus VAT

Disbursements

Disbursements are costs related to your matter that are payable to third parties such as Land Registry fees. We handle the payment of the disbursements on your behalf to ensure a smoother process. If searches are required we will obtain these on your behalf, the cost of this will range from £244.00 to £450 (plus VAT) dependent upon your mortgage lender's requirements and your choice of searches. The search standard package covers local authority, mining, environment, flood and water searches for your local area. We will furthermore obtain office copy entries for between £3.00-£6.00 in addition to a bankruptcy searches averaging £6.00 per transaction – these disbursements are subject to VAT. For purchase transactions subject to mortgage finance a Council of Mortgage Lenders Handbook search will need to be obtained at a cost of £12.00 shortly before exchange of contracts.

ID verification and anti-money laundering searches

£35 plus VAT per search per client. In addition, in cases of gifted deposits, the same search needs to be obtained in respect of however many persons will be making up the gift.

Land Duty or Land Tax on a Purchase

This depends on the purchase price of your property and your circumstances in relation to this and other property. You can calculate the amount which you will need to pay by using HMRC's website or if the property is located in Wales by using the Welsh Revenue Authority website.

The Land Registry fees are on the basis of the value of the property and are payable on all property purchases. The fee scale is as follows (in respect of existing registered titles and whole title applications capable of being submitted electronically):

0 to £80,000	£20
£80,001 to £100,000	£40
£100,001 to £200,000	£100
£200,001 to £500,000	£150
£500,001 to £1,000,000	£295
£1,000,001 and over	£500

Please note these are subject to change

In cases where the title isn't already registered or you have purchased part of a registered title then the Land Registry fees double in each price bracket. There is no VAT levied on Land Registry registration fees.

Leasehold disbursements

These are variable, some may apply or may not apply to all transactions and the costs may be determined by the lease, or by the freeholder or management company. Your conveyancer won`t know what the charges levied by these third parties are until they receive details from the title, the third parties, or a combination. Likewise they may or may not be subject to VAT. This list isn`t a limit to the disbursements that may be applicable but a generalisation for guidance –

(on sale) Fee for confirmation ground rent is paid up to date/no breaches of covenants - £50 - £200

(on sale) Management company pack - £75 - £275

(on sale) Certificate of compliance/deed of covenant - £50 - £240

(on purchase) Notice of transfer/charge - £50 - £100 per notice

(on purchase) Certificate of compliance/deed of covenant - £50 - £240

Referral Fee (if any) – **PLEASE NOTE WE DO NOT PAY REFERRAL FEES**

If we were to pay a referral fee to your estate agent we estimate that this will cost in the region of £50 to £250, depending upon the referrer involved. We would notify you of this in the event that this is applicable to your case. **Please note this would be a fee payable by ourselves, not you**. Should we enter into any such referral arrangement we would notify you of this writing in our initial documentation, giving details of the amount and to whom it will be paid. We would also seek to establish from you the circumstances of the referral and particularly, amongst other aspects, that your freedom of choice in choosing a firm to instruct was not in any way limited, and that you were informed of the referral arrangement by the introducer and the amount payable by us to them at the time you elected to instructed us. There are strict rules surrounding referral fees, the essence of which is to ensure that you as the consumer of legal services have freedom of choice and the information available to you at the point of instruction is sufficient to ensure you can make an informed choice. This information is given for information purposes and as stated above, we do not pay referral fees.

How long will your house purchase and sale take?

How long it will take from your offer being accepted until your move into your new house will depend on a number of factors. The average process takes between 8 and 12 weeks. It can be quicker or slower depending on the parties in the chain, issue of mortgages and other factors.

The key stages, broadly, and average timescales, are as follows, but cannot be guaranteed and should be used as a guide only –

Stage	Timescale
On instruction, we will send your details of the costs, disbursements and VAT attributable to your transaction, based on the information provided to us and the scope of our instructions. We will send you details of the further information we require from you, our terms of business and various questionnaires to complete and return.	We will send this to you within a day or two of being advised that you wish us to act. Clients usually return this within the week.
On sale contracts will be prepared and sent to buyer`s solicitors. Seller`s solicitor will seek information about any mortgage on the property to be repaid.	Usually within a few days of the initial documents above being returned to the solicitor. If the property is unregistered, leasehold, or documentation received incomplete, this could take a little longer.
Purchaser`s solicitor will raise any further enquiries apparent to be raised at that stage. Searches will usually be put in hand at this point. Documents such as boundary plan, property information form and fittings and contents list will be sent to buyer to review.	The timescale here will depend upon the complexity of the title, whether there are other documents to be obtained from third parties (often the case when a property is leasehold). It can take between 1-3 weeks to reach this stage.
Seller`s solicitor will deal with any further enquiries and purchaser`s solicitor will liaise with clients as further information/documentation received.	The timescale very much depends on the title and documentation relevant to it, investigating planning approvals, third party consents and so on can take time and can be anywhere between 1- 6 weeks in total.

In the meantime, the purchaser`s search results will be received, these will either result in further enquiries being raised or will be “passed”.	Local searches are currently being delayed by Covid and it can take 6 weeks in some areas to reach this stage. Search insurance can be discussed with your conveyancer.
Also whilst the above is happening, the buyer`s survey will be carried out and mortgage offer issued to buyer`s conveyancer.	This will take between 1 to 4 weeks usually but the timescales are again affected by Covid.
Buyer`s conveyancer will check the mortgage offer, attend to any requirements and matters the offer is subject to and report to the client on the terms.	Usually within a couple of days of receipt.
When all enquiries have been answered the buyer`s conveyancer will report fully to the client and arrange signature of documents.	The buyer`s conveyancer will do this generally as soon as all enquiries have been satisfactorily answered and they are able to comply with all the lender`s terms. To reach this stage can take around 8 weeks but if the property is leasehold it can take longer. They conveyancer may do this report in tranches as the transaction progresses, particularly if it is becoming protracted.
THIS IS THE POINT ALL PARTIES IN THE CHAIN NEED TO ACHIEVE BEFORE BEING ABLE TO AGREE A COMPLETION DATE	There may be a wait at this stage as everyone in the chain achieves this point of “readiness”. Estate agents can be invaluable at this stage in accessing the chain for progress. Often provisional completion dates are discussed and all parties in the chain need to agree that any date is achievable (removal arrangements are available, sufficient time for conveyancers to obtain funds and so on). The shorter the chain, the easier this is achieved.
Exchange of contracts	At this point the transaction becomes legally binding, as does the completion/moving date. The completion date will usually need to be at least a week after exchange of contracts, to ensure sufficient time for financial arrangements to be ready, particularly to ensure that mortgage advances can be released in time.
Completion	This is the date that ownership passes and vacant possession given (unless agreed otherwise). Ie everyone moves house.
AFTER COMPLETION	The new ownership will be registered at the Land Registry as well as the repayment of old mortgages and registrations of new. This can take some months and in some cases years, as the Land Registry continue to have a backlog of transactions. (delayed registrations can be expedited on application to the Land Registry if the delay is holding up another matter such as a sale or remorgage)

Costs and expectations - Probate and the administration of an estate

We offer clients three types of service to cater for your individual requirements. These are as follows:

1. Obtaining the Grant of Probate only for a non-taxable estate. You may wish to deal with the majority of administration of the estate yourself but require some help in completing the papers leading to probate which are the Legal Statement and, if the estate is liable to inheritance tax, an Inland Revenue account. If that is the case we are happy to complete those documents (on the basis that you provide us with all of the relevant information enable us to do this) £750 plus VAT where no Inheritance Tax is payable and £1,200 plus VAT where Inheritance Tax is payable.

2. Administration of an average sized estate (not involving the payment of Inheritance Tax). The exact cost will depend upon the individual circumstances of the matter such as the number of beneficiaries, a property, multiple bank accounts and shares etc. Generally speaking the amount of time spent by a fee earner dealing with an average estate is within the region of between eight and sixteen hours at a rate of £300 - £340 per hour but this can vary hugely depending upon the complexity of the matter and should not be taken as an indicative charge in your matter. In addition a value factor being a percentage of the size of the estate is also charged. This value factor is normally 1% of the estate, except the value of any residential property owned by the deceased which will be charged at a lesser rate of 0.5%. In cases where a member of the firm is acting as Executor that the value element increases to 1.50% and 0.75% respectively.

3. Probate cases involving the payment of Inheritance Tax. These are considerably more complex as they involve calculating Inheritance Tax and dealing with the Inland Revenue in the form of the Capital Taxes Offices. Our charges for dealing with these more complex types of Estates are similar to the charges outlined in 2 above for more straightforward matters save that the time spent in dealing with the case is considerably higher and can vary from say, 20 hours work to well over 100 hours work, depending upon the complexity of the case and the size of the estate.

Disbursements

Disbursements which are payable to third parties are the Probate application fee of £526.00, Probate copies of £2.00 per copy, Bankruptcy/Land Charges Department Searches of £6.00 approximately, Legal Notice Post in the London Gazette/The Journal which protects against unexpected claims for unknown creditors £250-£300. Only the Legal Notice Post disbursement will have VAT added.

Potential Additional Costs

If there is no Will or the estate consists of any shareholdings, stocks and bonds there is likely to be an additional cost that could range significantly depending on the estate and how it is to be dealt with. We can give you a more accurate quote once we have more information.

Dealing with the sale or transfer of any property in the estate is not included.

How long will this take?

On average estates not involving the payment of Inheritance Tax are generally dealt with in six to twelve months of the date of death of the deceased. Simply obtaining the Grant of Probate takes approximately 16 weeks up to a year. Collecting/encashing assets including dealing with tax matters can take approximately 28 weeks and once this has been done we can distribute the assets which usually takes 6 to 8 weeks. However, in cases which involve Inheritance Tax the minimum amount of time taken is normally approximately twelve months and such matters are generally concluded after 18 months to two years although in some extremely complicated cases, this can be longer.

For some services a fixed rate can be agreed, please contact us for more information.