

Our Complete Guide to **Buying a Property**





Sherry FitzGerald

Supporting you every step of the way

Buying a new home is an exciting and rewarding time but the amount of new information you need to take on board can feel a bit overwhelming. To help you find your way through the home buying process and find the right property you'll need an expert by your side - guiding you. That's where we come in.

For almost 40 years we have been helping buyers just like you all over Ireland. We have more experience in this field than any other agent in the country, so we are confident that with our Sales team and Mortgages team by your side, you will benefit from that experience and local knowledge.

We understand that there are different categories of buyer and that each stage of the buying process will be a personal journey. Knowing this we have tailored our Buyers Guide to meet your needs in one step-by-step handbook. From mortgage preparation to moving in, you'll find everything you need to know in one handy guide.




Step 1. Starting the journey

You may have already started to 'look around' and this is an important first step as you get ready to start your journey. Now would be a good time to register your needs with us and outline what's important to you, this way you gain access to an experienced specialist with an in-depth knowledge of the location you're considering. It's also a great way of keeping up-to-date on any new properties of interest as they become available.

Four types of buyer – which one are you?

- **First-Time Buyer** – a person who is making their first purchase of a property. Our guide on the **Help-to-Buy** (HTB) incentive outlines how they could qualify for a tax refund of up to €20,000 on a new home
- **Investor** – a person who buys a property as an investment with the intention of earning a return either through rental income, the future resale of the property or both. An investment property can be a long-term or short-term investment
- **Overseas** – typically a buyer who is looking to either invest in property in Ireland or has decided to relocate here or return home
- **Upsizing / Downsizing** – buyers looking for a larger or smaller property as their needs change and they find they need either more or less space than before. Our free **Market Appraisal** service will guide them on the value of their property





How we can help

You can begin your search by contacting any of our offices, or visit sherryfitz.ie to register for our exclusive buyer portal **mySherryFitz** where you will have access to a range of features such as booking viewings online, keeping track of activities on your favourite properties and much more.

At any time using our online platform, you can amend and adjust your requirements. Whether you're a first-time buyer, an investor, upsizing or downsizing, we will work hard to find the right property for you and will keep in touch on a regular basis.

In Ireland there are three main ways that properties are sold

1. **For Sale by Private Treaty** is where the sale of a property is agreed at a price negotiated directly between the agent and the purchaser
2. **For Sale by Public Auction** can suit very distinctive or rare-to-market properties where competitive bidding is probable. It can also help to speed up the purchase when time is a factor and is often used for business-to-business customers. Unconditional contracts are signed and a 10% non-refundable deposit is paid on the day.
3. **For Sale by Discreet Selling** is a private approach whereby an agent will contact pre-qualified buyers to view a property which isn't publicly going to the market

The cost of buying a home

Perhaps the hardest part of the buying process is in figuring out how you will be able to finance your purchase. Aside from the actual purchase price you will need to consider the other costs involved so that you are fully prepared and won't face any hiccups further on in the buying process. These will include such things as legal fees, structural survey costs if necessary, moving costs and the cost of furnishing your new home. But first you need to establish which way you intend to finance your purchase and there are typically three ways to do this.

1. **Cash Buyer** – you do not need a mortgage to make a purchase, however you will be asked by the estate agent to provide proof of funds in the form of a letter from your bank, accountant or solicitor
2. **Subject to Finance** – like the majority of us you will probably need to take out a mortgage to buy a property. You will need to demonstrate mortgage approval from your bank, broker or accountant, dated within the past 6 or 12 months depending on your provider. (See Step 2. Getting mortgage ready)
3. **Subject to Sale** – you have a property to sell and will be using the funds from the sale to buy another property. Where appropriate, ensure you advise the estate agent on the status of your own sale as it may influence your future purchase





Other costs to consider

Initial Booking Deposit – normally between 2 - 5% of the purchase price, this will be payable to your agent once your offer is formally accepted. This is fully refundable up until the point where contracts are signed

Deposit Balance – the balance of 10% of the purchase price, less your initial deposit is payable once you have signed the contracts, at which time it becomes non-refundable

Stamp Duty – this is a charge that the Government applies to the purchase of residential property. For properties up to €1,000,000 it is 1% of the purchase price. For properties over €1,000,000 it is 1% up to the first €1,000,000 plus 2% on the figure in excess of that amount. Stamp Duty is paid to the solicitor at the closing stage of the sale and it is important to note that this figure is not covered within your mortgage amount

Structural Survey – estimated costs €300

Bank Valuation – estimated costs €150

Annual Service Charges – (typically on apartments and some housing schemes). Where there are shared amenities and communal areas it is normal for a management company to be in place to maintain the complex. The charge for this service is covered by your annual management fee

Solicitors Fees – this can be a flat fee or a percentage of the purchase price. This is a cost that you may be able to negotiate when you appoint your solicitor

These costings can all add up to a considerable amount so it's important before beginning your property search that you get an idea of all the costs associated with buying your dream home

Step 2. Getting mortgage ready

If like most people you require a mortgage to purchase your home, an experienced broker can offer you so much at this stage. Getting that all-important mortgage can be a difficult and sometimes lengthy process so you will need the help of an informed advisor who will make you aware of any potential pitfalls and obstacles.

You will be faced with many choices and questions during this stage. Should you choose a fixed or variable interest rate mortgage? How much can you borrow? How long will it take you to pay off the loan? Your independent broker is there to advise you on each of these issues. So now is a good idea to start getting mortgage ready and putting yourself in prime position to secure that loan. Read our guide on **Getting Mortgage Ready**.

Questions to consider early in the mortgage process

- Are you in permanent/regular employment with a steady income? To get a mortgage you must have completed any probationary employment period and you should be at least 6 months (but preferably 12 months) in continuous employment
- Can you demonstrate your ability to repay? For example, by showing a strong savings history and strong payment history on a monthly basis
- Can you show your lenders some evidence of savings which demonstrates solid financial planning on your part and an ability to manage money?
- Have you started gathering key documentation? This includes 3 months' / weeks' payslips, 6 months' current account statements, 6 months' saving bank account statements/Credit Union statements, 12 months' loan account statements for all existing loans including existing mortgages and a recent P60 for all parties involved





How we can help

At Sherry FitzGerald Mortgages, we understand that securing your mortgage is one of the biggest financial decisions you will make and that it is a challenging, complex process. To get the best deal possible, you need an expert by your side who you can count on every step of the way.

Get in touch with us today on **1850 3000 30** or email financialservices@sherryfitz.ie and give yourself the best possible chance of getting the right mortgage for you.

Also on sherryfitz.ie you can use our online mortgage calculator and access our guide to **Getting Mortgage Ready**.

Step 3. Location is key

With your finances in place and your search criteria registered with us, it's time to consider your search. By now, you probably know how many bedrooms you are looking for and the general area you'd like to live in. In the property world, it's often said that your new home is the right combination of what you want, what you can afford and what is on the market.

Whether you are looking for a detached house with a garden or a city apartment, try to imagine living there. Is there a possibility your family needs will change in the coming years? Location is also a major factor and will be your primary consideration.

Key location issues to consider

- Get to know your neighbourhood – try and visit your chosen area at different times of the day and night. It's also a good idea to visit at weekends when people are out and about
- Schools, hospitals, sports clubs and public amenities – make a note of how well-served your new area is
- Other local amenities – what are the shops, supermarkets, restaurants, parks and pubs in the area like?
- Transport and infrastructure – find out if the area is well-served by public transport and take note of the frequency and quality of services
- Distance to and from work and family – how much time are you prepared to spend travelling to and from work every day or to visit loved ones?





How we can help

Any of our branches will be happy to provide you with information about the local area. To find a branch, visit our website sherryfitz.ie. We're also on hand to answer any queries you might have at any of our offices nationwide.

Please call in to discuss your needs, we're here to help.

Step 4. The shortlist

It's time to put together your shortlist and narrow down your options to those properties that tick as many boxes as possible, it's not always the case that you will find an exact fit, so decide which elements you could live without.

While the photos and floor plans you view on digital platforms will give you a good idea of a property, seeing the house for yourself is essential. It's not only the criteria that needs to fit, it's also the feel you get when you walk into a property that is every bit as important.

Viewing checklist

1. Lighting and natural light in particular is very important, so if you arrive and the lights are on during the daytime, turn them off to see how much natural light is available
2. The configuration of the property might not be to your liking but before dismissing it, it's worth asking the opinion of an architect to see if it could be changed and what approximate costs would be involved
3. Garden / balcony orientation is important if you like the sun on your outdoor space so check with us at the viewing
4. What's included in the sale? Check if kitchen appliances, carpets and curtains are included in the asking price or are they negotiable? The answer may have an impact on what you're prepared to offer





How we can help

While we have supplied you with some guidelines on what to look out for during a property viewing, we also have dedicated resources online to equip you with the knowledge to get the most from your viewing.

Visit sherryfitz.ie and get our complete **Viewing Guide**.

Step 5. Choosing a solicitor

Most importantly, you need to choose a solicitor with knowledge and experience who understands your needs. By and large, the conveyancing process (transfer of legal title from one person to another), is standard throughout the country but what can make all the difference is the help and expertise of a proactive, engaged and experienced solicitor.

Keep in mind that if you are buying a property at the same time as selling your existing property, it makes sense to appoint the same solicitor for both transactions. This should result in a smoother, faster process.

Very soon, you will need to be able to supply your solicitor's details, so choosing one is something you should prioritise. A starting point may be to seek recommendations from friends and family and search online for property specialists in your area. Try and narrow down a shortlist to three and then get in touch with each one individually. When choosing your solicitor, there are three key questions you need to ask.

1. Has the firm got a dedicated conveyancing department and if not, what level of experience do they have? A firm with a dedicated unit will likely ensure a smoother process on one hand. But on the other hand, a good personal connection with a solicitor you trust is paramount
2. How is your fee calculated? Some solicitors charge a flat fee and others require a percentage of the sale price so make sure you confirm this with them in advance
3. What information do I need to provide them with? An experienced solicitor will make you aware of what pieces of information and documents you need to be gathering together to get the process started



How we can help

If you are having difficulty finding the right solicitor to meet your needs, we would be happy to provide you with a list of suitable and independent local solicitors from which to choose one.

Please visit [sherryfitz.ie](https://www.sherryfitz.ie) to contact your local office.



Step 6. Making an offer in a Private Treaty Sale

Once you have found the property that is right for you, you're hopefully now ready and in a position to make an offer – having secured loan approval if needed.

It's important to present yourself as a credible buyer throughout the viewing process. By corresponding efficiently to any queries and having all your documents organised, you will be seen as an engaged and serious buyer which may give you an advantage if multiple offers are being received on your chosen property. It's also important to remember that buying a house can be an emotional process so try not to pin all your hopes on just one property.

Before you make an offer make sure all your queries have been answered. If you haven't had a second viewing now is the time to do it and if you're still not ready to make that offer but you are interested be sure to contact the agent and let them know of your intentions and buying position.

- When you're ready to make an offer, contact the estate agent and they will take your offer verbally but you may be also asked to confirm it in writing via email or by regular post
- In your offer, confirm if there any conditions attached like a 'subject to survey' option or similar
- Be ready to supply all the important documents like mortgage approval or proof of funds
- Your offer will then be registered and relayed to the vendor, any other bidders, viewers and third parties
- Await the response with the hope that your offer will be accepted and you can move on to the next stage – 'sale agreed'





Buying at Auction

If you are interested in a property that is going for sale by Auction you will have a defined period of time in which to have your affairs in place prior to the sale date. Once you have viewed the property and decided that it's the one for you, there are a number of steps to follow to ensure that you are fully prepared on the day of Auction. By buying a home at Auction you are skipping the sale agreed period of a private treaty sale and will be asked to sign contracts on the day.

What you need to do before auction day

1. Check the AMV (Advised Market Value) which is a guide figure outlined by the estate agent. On the day of the Auction, the vendor will set a reserve price – this is the price below which they will not sell the property
2. Survey – to ensure that the property is structurally sound you need to get a surveyor to inspect the property for you, so that in the event of a successful bid you know exactly what potential work may need to be addressed
3. Contract & Title – you should seek legal advice through your Solicitor on the Title and Conditions of Sale of the property to make sure that you are happy with any small print or detail that may be included as part of the contract
4. Mortgage – if you need to arrange a mortgage it is very important that you are mortgage approved and are in a position to present a letter as evidence of a binding offer from your lender on the day of the Auction
5. Deposit – you will be required to pay a 10% deposit of the purchase price on the day, to a minimum of €5,000, so you should have monies ready to ensure that the purchase will proceed successfully
6. Pre-register your intention to attend the Auction through an Auction registration form and ensure that you have made yourself familiar with any terms and conditions
7. Keep in touch with the estate agent throughout the sales campaign so that you are kept up to date with any changes that may happen, such as the property being withdrawn or sold prior to the Auction date. It is also advisable to keep looking at alternative properties to keep your options open
8. Be prepared, and before the Auction set yourself a realistic financial limit beyond which you are not prepared to bid as it can be easy to get carried away in the bidding process, especially when you are emotionally invested in a property

For further tips and advice on buying at Auction please see our comprehensive guide www.sherryfitz.ie/buying-at-auctions

Step 7. Going 'Sale Agreed'

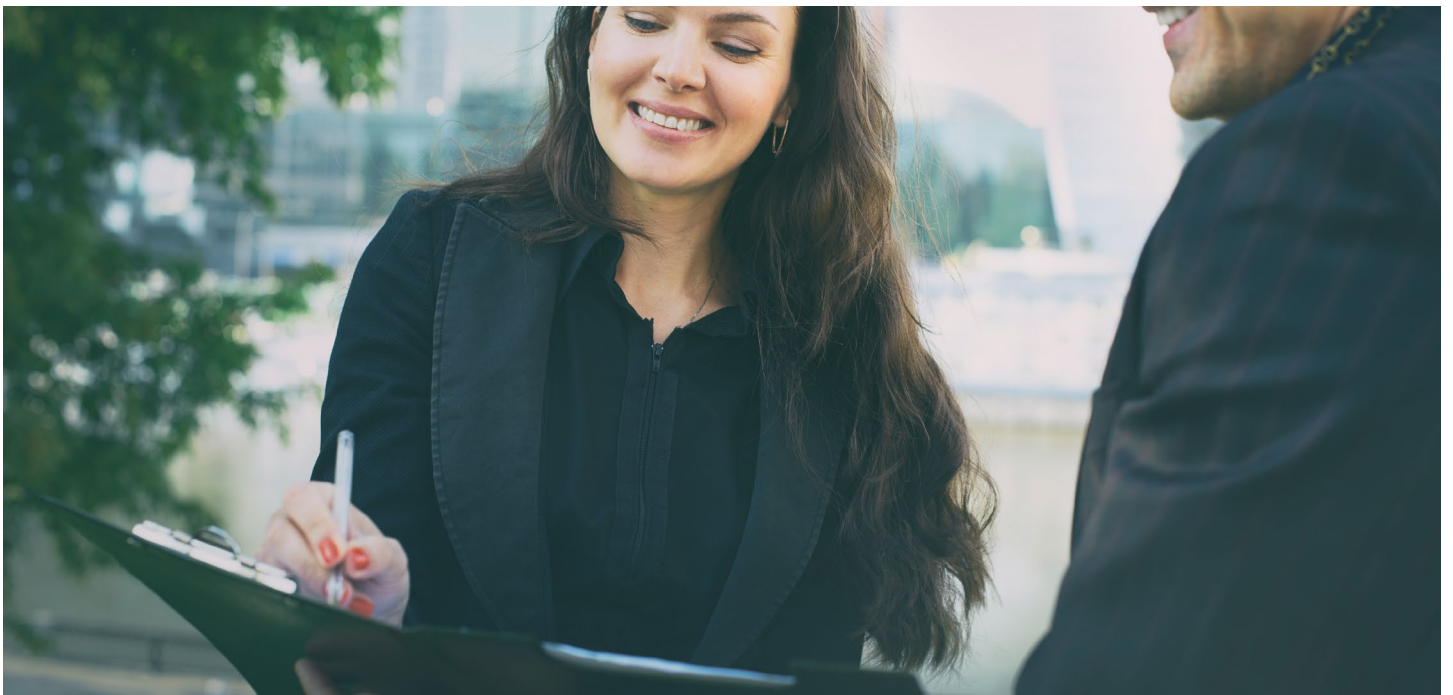
If your offer is successful the estate agent will be in touch to say that your offer has been accepted by the vendor and following this conversation you will receive a sales advice letter from them, usually both by post and email.

This is also sent to your solicitor, the vendor and the vendor's solicitor. In this document, the agreed purchase price, any conditions of sale, any items included in the sale, the estimated signing and closing dates and contact details of all parties, will be outlined.

Keep in mind that the closing date on the sales advice note is an ideal date that all parties are working towards but it can be subject to change.

What you need to do now

- **Booking Deposit** – this is normally between 2 - 5% of the purchase price, you should make the booking deposit payable to the estate agent by cheque, bank transfer, bank draft or postal order. It is fully refundable up until the point at which you sign a contract
- **Structural Survey** – organise a structural survey on the property within a few days of going sale agreed. You will need to cover the cost of the survey and your solicitor or bank may request to see this report
- **Bank Valuation** – you will need to have an independent bank valuation completed. The bank or lender will provide you or your broker with a list of their panel of valuers and you will need to cover the cost
- **Solicitor** – provide your agent with your solicitor's details upon acceptance of an offer. It is important you keep in regular contact with your solicitor, and the estate agent will keep in contact with the vendor and their solicitor to ensure the sale is kept on track





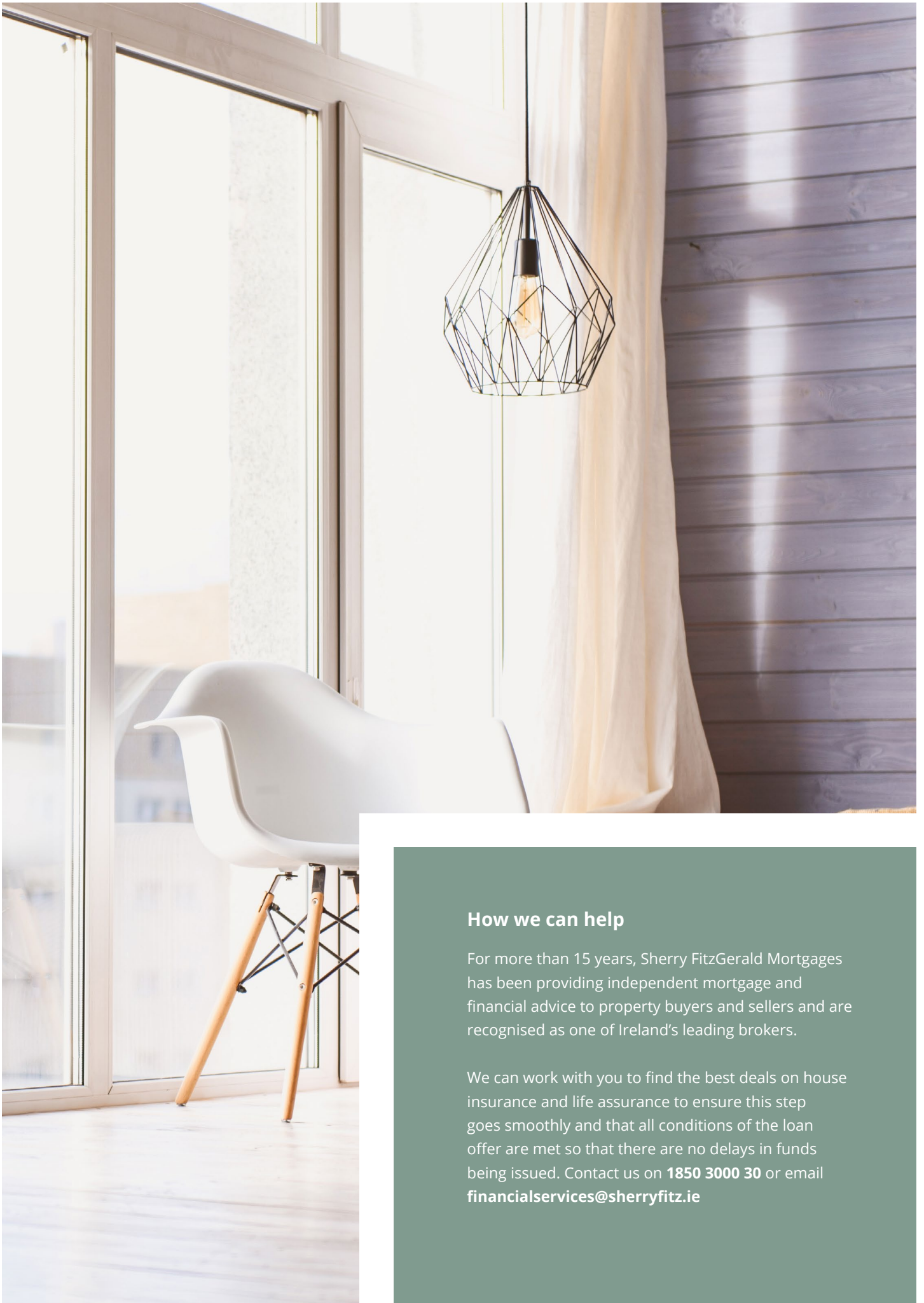
Step 8. Signing and exchanging contracts

While you are very close to securing your new home, there is still some administration that needs to be completed. It is important to keep in contact with your solicitor on a regular basis to get updates on contracts and have any queries answered. Keep in mind that while all parties will aim for a certain date at the start of the sale agreed process, there may be delays which are simply unavoidable. Our experience shows that the more communication between you and your solicitor there is, the more efficient the process will be.

Contract signing and exchange – step-by-step

- The vendor's solicitor will forward contracts to your solicitor upon receipt of title
- Your solicitor will review the contracts and may respond to the vendor's solicitor with some questions (pre-contract queries)
- If you are taking out a mortgage on the property you will need to secure a 'Letter of Loan' offer from your lending institution or bank before contracts are signed and the balance of the 10% deposit is paid
- The balance of the purchase price is due on the day the sale closes. Again, if you are taking out a mortgage before any funds can be drawn down you will need to have house insurance and life assurance in place with an experienced Financial Services provider
- It is a good idea to try and arrange transfer of funds to the vendor's solicitor 3 - 5 days in advance of the closing date to avoid any delays





How we can help

For more than 15 years, Sherry FitzGerald Mortgages has been providing independent mortgage and financial advice to property buyers and sellers and are recognised as one of Ireland's leading brokers.

We can work with you to find the best deals on house insurance and life assurance to ensure this step goes smoothly and that all conditions of the loan offer are met so that there are no delays in funds being issued. Contact us on **1850 3000 30** or email **financialservices@sherryfitz.ie**

Step 9. Closing the deal

Almost there - before transferring funds to the vendor's solicitor it is likely that your solicitor will advise you to carry out a 'pre-closing' inspection - this normally takes place on the day of, or before closing. This will make sure the house has been cleared by the vendor and is in an acceptable condition for closing - this is arranged through your estate agent.

One final thing you need to do is to collect details on the utilities and this information is usually passed between the solicitors. To prevent services being disconnected, open your new utilities accounts within 10 days of taking ownership.

Remember to collect the following utilities information...

- MPRN: (Electricity Meter Point Reference Number)
- GPRN: (Gas Point Reference Number)
- WPRN: (Water Meter Point Reference Number)

When your agent receives confirmation from the solicitor that the inspection has been completed and all is in order the sale will officially close. You can then arrange to collect your keys from the estate agent.

That's it, you're all done. Congratulations! Now you can look forward to enjoying your new property and remember we're always here to answer any questions or deal with any concerns you may have.





Warning: If you do not keep up your repayments you may lose your home.

Warning: Your home is at risk if you do not keep up payments on a mortgage or any other loan secured on.

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