

Alerts

Warning: Email misusing the name of Dutton Gregory LLP

23 December 2021

An email has been sent misusing the name of Dutton Gregory LLP, regarding the purchase of a property.

What is the scam?

An email has been sent misusing the name of a fee earner at Dutton Gregory LLP, regarding the purchase of a property.

The email seen by the SRA was sent to a client, purportedly from a fee earner at Dutton Gregory LLP, requesting they pay 'a mandatory but refundable security deposit fee of 12,990GBP' to an 'FCA bank account' in accordance with 'Anti-money laundering financing laws, through the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)'. The email further advises this money would be refunded after 90 working days.

The email seen by the SRA appears to have been from a genuine employee of the genuine firm (see below). The email address used is p.stevens-white@duttongregory.co.uk.

Is there a genuine firm or person?

The SRA does authorise and regulate a genuine firm called Dutton Gregory LLP. The genuine firm's head office is Concept House, 6 Stoneycroft Rise, Chandler's Ford, Eastleigh, Hampshire, SO53 3LD.

The genuine firm employs a member of staff called Ms Penny Stevens-White, who is a fee earner at the firm. Her genuine email address is p.stevens-white@duttongregory.co.uk.

The genuine firm has confirmed that neither it nor any of its employees have any connection to the email referred to above. It is believed the genuine email address was 'spoofed'; a technique used in spam and phishing attacks to trick users into thinking a message came from a person or entity they either know or can trust.

What should I do?

When a firm's or individual's identity has been copied exactly (or cloned), due diligence is necessary. If you receive correspondence claiming to be from the above firm(s) or individual(s), or information of a similar nature to that described, you should conduct your own due diligence by checking the authenticity of the correspondence by contacting the law firm directly by reliable and established means. You can contact the SRA to find out if individuals or firms are regulated and authorised by the SRA and verify an individual's or firm's practising details. Other verification methods, such as checking public records (e.g. telephone directories and company records) may be required in other circumstances.