

Managing client anxiety through a transaction.

A practical guide and checklist



MENTAL
HEALTH
AWARENESS
WEEK



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LawCare

OneSearch.

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People don't buy houses every year. For most, it'll be one of the biggest moments of their lives, and conveyancers carry that weight on their behalf, often without much acknowledgement.

Searches are our world, but we work closely enough with conveyancers to know that the pressure doesn't start and end there. This guide is written from that vantage point; people who care about the whole transaction, even if searches are where we can help most directly.

Mental Health Awareness Week felt like the right moment to share something that might actually help with the parts of the role that don't often get talked about.”

Elizabeth Jarvis | Divisional Director of Legal and Search



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The hidden pressure in every transaction.

There's a version of conveyancing that looks, from the outside, quite straightforward. A buyer finds a property. Searches are ordered. Results come back. Contracts exchange. Keys change hands.

Anyone who's done this job knows that version bears little resemblance to reality.

The truth is that a property transaction is one of the most emotionally loaded experiences a person can go through. For your clients, it often represents the largest financial commitment of their lives – tied up with hope, anxiety, family pressure, and an acute awareness of everything that could go wrong. When things slow down, that emotional weight doesn't sit quietly. It lands in your inbox. It comes through on the phone. It shows up in messages sent at 11pm asking if everything is still okay.

Delays are one of the most common moments where client anxiety surfaces, not because searches are slow, but because uncertainty during this stage is hard to manage when expectations haven't been set clearly from the outset. Unexpected hold-ups, third party delays, incomplete upfront information – none of these are failures on your part. But they're yours to communicate, manage, and absorb.

This guide is about making that part of the job a little easier. Not by adding to your workload or asking you to make promises you can't keep, but by sharing practical habits that help reduce uncertainty, calm anxious clients, and protect your own headspace in the process.

That last part matters. Conveyancers are, in many transactions, the primary emotional shock absorbers. Managing client anxiety is part of the role, but it comes at a cost. With Mental Health Awareness Week as the backdrop, this guide looks honestly at both sides of the equation: how to reduce and communicate delays more effectively, and how to look after yourself while you do it.



Why delays hit clients so hard.

A client who hasn't heard anything in a week isn't just impatient – they're catastrophising. The seller is considering throwing in the towel. Something terrible has been found on the property. Their conveyancer has forgotten them entirely. It doesn't matter that none of those things are true. In the absence of information, people fill the gap with the worst version of events.

That's not a character flaw. Buying a home consistently ranks among the most stressful life events a person goes through – and for most of your clients, this is one of very few times they'll experience it. The stakes feel enormous, because for them, they are.

Here's the reframe that makes this manageable: delay and anxiety aren't the same thing. A case that's running late doesn't have to mean a client in crisis. What drives anxiety isn't the wait itself – it's the feeling of not knowing, and of not being heard. And that's something you can influence, even when the timeline isn't in your hands.

The sections that follow are built around that idea.

42%

of conveyancers cite slow transaction times as their number one frustration

[Landmark Market Research 2026](#)

123

average number of days from instruction to completion

[State of the Market 2026](#)

43%

of cases still require additional enquiries due to incomplete information (down from 51% in 2024)

[Landmark Market Research 2026](#)

What anxious clients actually need.

There's a temptation, when delays begin to surface, to wait until you have something concrete to say before picking up the phone. It feels more professional. More certain. Less like you're calling to say nothing.

In practice, that instinct works against you.

What clients need during a delay isn't resolution – it's contact. A brief, honest update that acknowledges where things are, sets a realistic expectation for what happens next, and confirms that someone is on top of it. That call or email rarely takes more than a few minutes, but not making it can undo weeks of goodwill.

The difference between reassurance and transparency

These two things can look similar, but they pull in opposite directions. Reassurance – “I'm sure it'll be fine; these things take time” – is well-intentioned but hollow. Clients can hear when they're being managed rather than informed, and it tends to increase anxiety rather than reduce it.

Transparency is more uncomfortable in the short term but more effective overall. “The local authority is currently running at three weeks – we're at day sixteen, so we're expecting results by the end of next week” gives the client something real to hold onto. It shows you know what's happening. It gives them a date to focus on instead of a void.

A simple communication cadence

You don't need a complex system. A consistent rhythm of brief, proactive updates is enough to keep most clients calm through a delay:

- **At the point of ordering**
Set the expectation. Tell the client what you've ordered, roughly when you expect results, and what you'll do if that changes.
- **At the midpoint**
A brief check-in, even if nothing has changed. “Still on track, expecting results by [date]” takes thirty seconds to send and prevents three anxious calls.
- **If a delay emerges**
Get ahead of it. A proactive message explaining the situation and the next steps lands very differently from a response to an increasingly frustrated client who has already called twice.

One practical shift that makes this easier

The hardest part of proactive communication is remembering to do it when you're managing a full caseload. Building update triggers into your case management system – so a nudge is sent at day seven, day fourteen, or whenever a file hits a certain stage – takes the cognitive load out of it. It becomes a workflow step, not a judgement call you must make under pressure.



Workflow changes that reduce delays (and the anxiety they cause).

Delays in a transaction can come from many directions. Some of the most avoidable ones happen earlier than you'd think. The most effective way to manage client anxiety during delays is, of course, to reduce the delays themselves. Not all of them are avoidable – local authority backlogs, regional variation, incomplete upfront information – but more of them are than most firms realise.

Get moving earlier than feels necessary

The single most impactful change most firms can make is also the simplest: order searches sooner. Every day between instruction and ordering is a day added to the back end of the transaction – and with average completion times sitting at 19 weeks, there's rarely any slack to absorb it.

The common default of waiting for the title pack before ordering is understandable, but in most residential transactions you have enough information to proceed earlier than that. Building search ordering into your day-one workflow – as a trigger, not a decision – removes the delay before it starts.

Know your turnaround times before your client asks

One of the most avoidable sources of client anxiety is a conveyancer who can't give a confident answer to "when will this information be back?" Turnaround times vary significantly by local authority and by search type – and quoting a client a timeframe based on last month's experience, or gut feel, is a gamble that often doesn't pay off.

Having access to live turnaround data changes that conversation entirely. Instead of a vague estimate, you can give a specific, evidence-based expectation at the point of ordering – and flag proactively if that picture changes.

Onesearch turnaround warnings

Our turnaround warnings page gives you a regularly updated view of estimated turnaround times across local authorities – so you can make informed decisions about search routes and give clients a realistic picture from day one. Free to use after registering at onesearch.direct



Simplify your supplier setup

Every additional search supplier in your workflow is another variable, another point of contact, and another potential source of delay. When results come back at contrasting times, in different formats, from different providers, managing the picture across a transaction becomes harder – and the gaps between updates grow.

Consolidating your searches with a single provider reduces that complexity. One portal, one account manager, one place to go when something needs chasing. The administrative overhead shrinks, and the visibility improves – which means fewer moments where you genuinely don't know what to tell a client because you're still waiting on three different suppliers yourself.

Get ahead of delays before they become conversations

Even with the best workflow, delays happen. The difference between a client who stays calm and one who escalates is almost always whether they heard about the delay from you first, or worked it out themselves.

Live turnaround data helps here too. If you can see that a particular local authority has slipped from ten days to eighteen since you ordered, you can get ahead of it – adjusting the client's expectation before the original date passes, rather than explaining yourself after it.

That single shift – from reactive to proactive – is one of the most effective anxiety-reduction tools available to a conveyancer. And it costs nothing except the habit of checking.



Looking after yourself.

Most of this guide has focused on your clients. This section is about you.

Conveyancers are, in many transactions, the primary emotional shock absorber. You're fielding anxiety from buyers and sellers, pressure from estate agents, urgency from the other side – often simultaneously, often on cases where the underlying stress has nothing to do with anything you've done. You absorb it, manage it, and get on with the next thing.

That's a significant load. And in a profession where the pace is relentless and the caseloads are heavy, it's the kind of pressure that's easy to normalise – to mistake for just how the job feels, rather than something worth paying attention to.

When the hold-up isn't yours to fix

Delays create a specific kind of stress for conveyancers that's worth naming. It's the stress of being responsible for something you can't control. You've ordered the search. You've done everything right. But the local authority is running three weeks behind, the client is calling daily, and there's nothing you can do to make it move faster.

That feeling – of accountability without agency – is one of the more draining experiences in any professional role. It's worth recognising it for what it is, and giving yourself permission to acknowledge it.

Some practical things that help

- **Set communication boundaries where you can**
Being available to anxious clients is part of the job, but being available at all hours to all clients simultaneously isn't sustainable. Clear response time expectations – set early in the relationship – give clients a framework and give you breathing room.
- **Make your workload visible**
One of the compounding stressors of a heavy caseload is the feeling that everything is urgent and nothing is under control. Simple visibility tools – even a basic case status overview – can reduce that ambient pressure by giving you a clearer picture of where things stand.
- **Talk to someone**
It's not always easy to say when something is weighing on you – but where you can, talking to a colleague or supervisor makes a real difference. Conveyancing can be an oddly solitary profession despite being a team environment.
- **Know that support exists**
Organisations like LawCare exist specifically to support the mental health and wellbeing of legal professionals – offering a helpline, peer support, and resources designed for the realities of legal practice.





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“We know how demanding conveyancing can be, with high volumes of work and expectations from all sides. It’s no surprise this can lead to stress and anxiety building up, and getting support early can really help before things escalate or start to feel too much. If you can’t talk to a colleague or supervisor, you can get in touch with LawCare, where you’ll find people who understand the legal sector.”

Trish McLellan
Director of Engagement | LawCare

A final thought

The habits in this guide – clearer communication, earlier ordering, better turnaround visibility – aren’t just good for your clients. They’re good for you. Every proactive update you send is one fewer anxious call to field. Every accurate expectation you set is one fewer awkward conversation to manage. Getting the process right protects everyone in it.

Your quick reference checklist.

Tear out, pin up, or share with your team.

Before you order

- Order searches at the earliest opportunity – don't wait for the full title pack
- Check turnaround times before ordering
- Use turnaround data to set a specific, realistic expectation with your client at the point of ordering

When you order

- Tell the client what you've ordered, when you expect results, and what you'll do if that changes
- Set a reminder or workflow trigger to check in at the midpoint – even if nothing has changed
- Note the expected return date in your case management system and flag if it passes

During a delay

- Get ahead of it – contact the client before they contact you
- Be transparent rather than reassuring – give a specific revised expectation, not a vague one
- Check live turnaround data to give an accurate updated picture
- If the delay is significant, consider whether an alternative search route is appropriate.

Looking after yourself

- Set clear response time expectations with clients early in the relationship
- Make your caseload visible – to yourself and your team
- It's not always easy to say when something is weighing on you – but where you can, talk to a colleague or supervisor
- Remember: proactive communication reduces reactive stress, for everyone

LawCare

LawCare offers free, confidential support to anyone working in the legal sector. You can reach them by phone on **0800 279 6888**, online chat, or email, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Visit **lawcare.org.uk**

OneSearch

OneSearch helps conveyancers move faster, with confidence. Visit us at **onesearch.direct** or call us on **0800 052 0117**.