

Renting property in response to adverts on social media

If you are approached directly by someone on line/social media offering a property for rent, or are responding to an advert, you need to be on your guard that this is not a scam. This is particularly the case with Facebook, where people advertise properties that simply do not exist, or at least not in the area where they say they are.

Anyone can copy photos of properties which look enticing, and can make themselves appear legitimate by stealing logos and website content from legitimate businesses. You need to check carefully that the advertisement is legitimate and the property exists and is available for rent. The following tips will help you reduce the risk of being scammed

Initial checks

- If the advert is by a third party, who you do not know, ask to deal directly with the owner, or the established letting agent. If this is a private landlord and you are still unsure, ask for proof of ownership of the property.
- Search the net for the landlords name, phone number, the landlords own address (always ask for this) as well as the property address can turn up discrepancies. You might find the property listed somewhere else by the genuine letting agent or landlord.
- You can also right click a photo and search google, it might give you the genuine photo, with location.
- Check the photo carefully, does it look like a property in the area it is being advertised. Watermarks on photos or power sockets, are giveaway clues
- Facebook - Fake and scam pages don't usually last more than a few months before Facebook takes them down. Scroll back on their timeline to see any adverse comments on their page
- If it is a short term rent ask for proof that it has been registered as an Alojamento Local.
- Ask for verifiable contact details preferably a landline, remember .gmail addresses are easy to establish

Payment

- Do not give PayPal or bank info out unless you have seen a property and agree to terms.
- Never pay any money upfront until you are certain that the landlord and/or letting agent is genuine,
- Preferably pay by credit card or PayPal. Avoid Western Union and MoneyGram. Most fraudsters use interbank transfer.

Viewing properties

- Never view properties when you are alone and ask the landlord for their ID.

In conclusion

- If it is being offered urgently at a highly discounted price that is too good to be true, then it usually is.
- If you suspect that the advert is fraud then snip/copy it and report it to the police.
- Preferably rent through established letting agents.
- Make sure you use trusted brand websites. Check carefully the URL name is legitimate not something similar to the original.