# Reverend regains home after four-year battle with identity fraud



A reverend from Luton, Bedfordshire, is on the cusp of regaining possession of his home after nearly four years of battling with identity fraud. Reverend Mike Hall, aged 57, had his terraced house sold without his knowledge in August 2021 while he was working away in North Wales. The selling of the property, valued at £131,000, was facilitated by a fraudster who impersonated him and applied for a duplicate driving licence, enabling the scammer to set up bank accounts and instruct solicitors in Hall's name.

The repercussions for Hall were significant. Upon being notified by neighbours that lights were on in his house, he returned to find the locks had been changed and his property had been stripped of all furnishings. In an interview with the Daily Mail, Hall recounted the shock he felt upon discovering a builder working inside the property. “I tried my key in the front door, it didn't work and a man opened the front door to me – and the shock of seeing the house completely stripped of furniture... everything was out of the property,” he stated.

Though the Land Registry later acknowledged its mistakes, including the confirmation of the fraudulent sale, the situation did not resolve swiftly for Hall. In November 2023, after significant legal challenges, the buyer reluctantly agreed to vacate the premises. However, Hall faced further complications when he found a family occupying the house, having signed a bogus tenancy agreement. Since then, he embarked on a lengthy legal process to evict them, which has taken an additional 17 months.

Recently, at the Luton County Court, Judge Elaine Vignoli awarded Hall possession of the home, ordering the family to vacate within 14 days. However, Hall now faces substantial renovation costs to make the property habitable again, estimating around £70,000 due to extensive neglect and damage, including a flood in the kitchen. His legal expenses to evict the family have already reached approximately £8,000. Hall has voiced concerns over the lack of provisions in the Land Registry Act, stating that there is no entitlement for claims related to emotional distress or loss of income resulting from the fraud.

Bailiffs are expected to attend the property within the next fortnight to assist in the eviction of the current occupants. The Land Registry, which has been targeted for its oversight in this case, confirmed to the media that registration title fraud is a priority area for their operations. Bedfordshire Police are also conducting ongoing investigations and have arrested five individuals in connection with the case since its inception. All have since been released under investigation.

In reflecting on the ordeal, Hall expressed his heightened awareness of vulnerability to fraud, stating, "It's made me conscious of just how vulnerable we really are when it comes to fraudsters because often they are two steps ahead of the organisations that look into these things." His experience underscores the complexities and implications of identity theft, particularly in property ownership cases.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.joe.co.uk/news/vicar-walked-into-his-house-of-30-years-to-find-stranger-living-there-457215> - This article corroborates the story of Reverend Mike Hall, who discovered his house had been sold without his knowledge due to identity theft. It details his experience upon returning to find the house stripped of furniture and the subsequent legal battle.
* <https://ansons.law/ansons-solicitors-address-the-growing-concern-of-identity-theft-leading-to-property-fraud/> - This piece highlights the growing concern of property fraud resulting from identity theft, using Reverend Mike Hall's case as an example. It emphasizes the need for legal awareness and action in such scenarios.
* <https://www.titleguardian.com/cases/luton-reverend-case-continued-what-happened-so-far> - This article provides updates on Reverend Mike Hall's case, including his efforts to regain possession of his property and the challenges he faced with squatters. It also discusses the broader issue of property fraud.
* <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10311201/> - While not directly related to Reverend Hall's case, this article discusses the use of digital evidence in criminal investigations, which can be relevant to identity theft and property fraud cases.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This is the source of the original article about Reverend Mike Hall's experience with identity theft and property fraud. However, without specific content from this URL, it serves as a general reference.
* <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/22/2024-07496/guidance-for-federal-financial-assistance> - This document provides general guidance on financial assistance and entity identifiers, which, while not directly related to Reverend Hall's case, touches on broader issues of identity verification and fraud prevention.