

# Description of the RICS HomeBuyer (Survey & Valuation) Service

## The service

The RICS HomeBuyer (Survey & Valuation) Service includes:

- an **inspection** of the property (see 'The inspection')
- a **report** based on the inspection (see 'The report')
- a **valuation** which is part of the report (see 'The Valuation').

**The surveyor who provides the RICS HomeBuyer Service (Survey) aims to give you professional advice to help you to:**

- make an informed decision on whether to go ahead with buying the property
- make an informed decision on what is a reasonable price to pay for the property
- take account of any repairs or replacements the property needs; and
- consider what further advice you should take before committing to purchase the property.

## The inspection

The surveyor inspects the inside and outside of the main building and all permanent outbuildings, but does not force or open up the fabric. This means that the surveyor does not take up carpets, floor coverings or floorboards, move furniture, remove the contents of cupboards, roof spaces, etc., remove secured panels and/or hatches or undo electrical fittings.

If necessary, the surveyor carries out parts of the inspection when standing at ground level from public property next door where accessible.

The surveyor may use equipment such as a damp-meter, binoculars and torch, and may use a ladder for flat roofs and for hatches no more than 3 metres above level ground (outside) or floor surfaces (inside) if it is safe to do so.

## Services to the property

Services are generally hidden within the construction of the property. This means that only the visible parts of the available services can be inspected, and the surveyor does not carry out specialist tests. The visual inspection cannot assess the efficiency or safety of electrical, gas or other energy sources; plumbing, heating or drainage installations (or whether they meet current regulations); or the inside condition of any chimney, boiler or other flue.

## Outside the property

The surveyor inspects the condition of boundary walls, fences, permanent outbuildings and areas in common (shared) use. To inspect these areas, the surveyor walks around the grounds and any neighbouring public property where access can be obtained.

Buildings with swimming pools and sports facilities are also treated as permanent outbuildings, but the surveyor does not report on the leisure facilities, such as the pool itself and its equipment, landscaping and other facilities (for example, tennis courts and temporary outbuildings).

## Flats

When inspecting flats, the surveyor assesses the general condition of outside surfaces of the building, as well as its access areas (for example, shared hallways and staircases). The surveyor inspects roof spaces only if they are accessible from within the property. The surveyor does not inspect drains, lifts, fire alarms and security systems.

## Dangerous materials, contamination and environmental issues

The surveyor does not make any enquiries about contamination or other environmental dangers. However, if the surveyor suspects a problem, he or she should recommend a further investigation.

The surveyor may assume that no harmful or dangerous materials have been used in the construction, and does not have a duty to justify making this assumption. However, if the inspection shows that these materials have been used, the surveyor must report this and ask for further instructions.

The surveyor does not carry out an asbestos inspection and does not act as an asbestos inspector when inspecting properties that may fall within the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012. With flats, the surveyor assumes that there is a 'dutyholder' (as defined in the regulations), and that in place are an asbestos register and an effective management plan which does not present a significant risk to health or need any immediate payment. The surveyor does not consult the dutyholder.

## The report

The surveyor produces a report of the inspection for you to use, but cannot accept any liability if it is used by anyone else. If you decide not to act on the advice in the report, you do this at your own risk. The report focuses on matters that, in the surveyor's opinion, may affect the value of the property if they are not addressed.

### **The report is in a standard format and includes the following sections.**

- A Introduction to the report
- B About the inspection
- C Overall opinion and summary of the condition ratings
- D About the property
- E Outside the property
- F Inside the property
- G Services
- H Grounds (including shared areas for flats)
- I Issues for your legal advisers
- J Risks
- K Valuation
- L Surveyor's declaration
  - What to do now
  - Description of the RICS HomeBuyer (Survey & Valuation) Service
  - Typical house diagram

## Condition ratings

The surveyor gives condition ratings to the main parts (the 'elements') of the main building, garage and some outside elements. The condition ratings are described as follows.

**Condition rating 3** – defects that are serious and/or need to be repaired, replaced or investigated urgently.

**Condition rating 2** – defects that need repairing or replacing but are not considered to be either serious or urgent. The property must be maintained in the normal way.

**Condition rating 1** – no repair is currently needed. The property must be maintained in the normal way.

**NI** – not inspected.

The surveyor notes in the report if it was not possible to check any parts of the property that the inspection would normally cover. If the surveyor is concerned about these parts, the report tells you about any further investigations that are needed.

The surveyor does not report on the cost of any work to put right defects or make recommendations on how these repairs should be carried out. However, there is general advice in the 'What to do now' section at the end of the report.

## Energy

The surveyor has not prepared the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) as part of the RICS HomeBuyer Service for the property. If the surveyor has seen the current EPC, he or she will present the energy-efficiency and environmental impact ratings in this report. The surveyor does not check the ratings and cannot comment on their accuracy.

## Issues for legal advisers

The surveyor does not act as 'the legal adviser' and does not comment on any legal documents. If, during the inspection, the surveyor identifies issues that your legal advisers may need to investigate further, the surveyor may refer to these in the report (for example, check whether there is a warranty covering replacement windows).

This report has been prepared by a surveyor ('the Individual Surveyor') merely in his or her capacity as an employee or agent of a firm or company or other business entity ('the Company'). The report is the product of the Company, not of the Individual Surveyor. All of the statements and opinions contained in this report are expressed entirely on behalf of the Company, which accepts sole responsibility for these. For his or her part, the Individual Surveyor assumes no personal financial responsibility or liability in respect of the report and no reliance or inference to the contrary should be drawn.

In the case of sole practitioners, the surveyor may sign the report in his or her own name unless the surveyor operates as a sole trader limited liability company.

Nothing in this report excludes or limits liability for death or personal injury (including disease and impairment of mental condition) resulting from negligence.

## Risks

This section summarises defects and issues that present a risk to the building or grounds, or a safety risk to people. These may have been reported and condition rated against more than one part of the property or may be of a more general nature, having existed for some time and which cannot reasonably be changed.

If the property is leasehold, the surveyor gives you general advice and details of questions you should ask your legal advisers.

## The valuation

The surveyor gives an opinion on both the market value of the property and the reinstatement cost at the time of the inspection (see the 'Reinstatement cost' section).

### Market value

'Market value' is the estimated amount for which an asset or liability should exchange on the valuation date between a willing buyer and a willing seller in an arm's length transaction, after proper marketing wherein the parties had each acted knowledgeably, prudently and without compulsion'

When deciding on the market value, the surveyor also makes the following assumptions.

### The materials, construction, services, fixtures and fittings, and so on

The surveyor assumes that:

- an inspection of those parts that have not yet been inspected would not identify significant defects
- no dangerous or damaging materials or building techniques have been used in the property
- there is no contamination in or from the ground, and the ground has not been used as landfill
- the property is connected to, and has the right to use, the mains services mentioned in the report and
- the valuation does not take account of any furnishings, removable fittings and sales incentives of any description.

### Legal matters

The surveyor assumes that:

- the property is sold with 'vacant possession' (your legal advisers can give you more information on this term)
- the condition of the property, or the purpose that the property is or will be used for, does not break any laws
- no particularly troublesome or unusual restrictions apply to the property, that the property is not affected by problems which would be revealed by the usual legal enquiries and that all necessary planning and Building Regulations permissions (including permission to make alterations) have been obtained and any works undertaken comply with such permissions; and
- the property has the right to use the mains services on normal terms, and that the sewers, mains services and roads giving access to the property have been 'adopted' (that is, they are under local-authority, not private, control).

The surveyor reports any more assumptions that have been made or found not to apply. If the property is leasehold, the general advice referred to earlier explains what other assumptions the surveyor has made.

## Reinstatement cost

Reinstatement cost is the cost of rebuilding an average home of the type and style inspected to its existing standard using modern materials and techniques and in line with current Building Regulations and other legal requirements.

This includes the cost of rebuilding any garage, boundary or retaining walls and permanent outbuildings, and clearing the site. It also includes professional fees, but does not include VAT (except on fees).

The reinstatement cost helps you decide on the amount of buildings insurance cover you will need for the property.

## Standard terms of engagement

**1 The service** – the surveyor provides the standard RICS HomeBuyer (Survey & Valuation) Service ('the service') described in the 'Description of the RICS HomeBuyer (Survey & Valuation) Service', unless you and the surveyor agree in writing before the inspection that the surveyor will provide extra services. Any extra service will require separate terms of engagement to be entered into with the surveyor. Examples of extra services include:

- costing of repairs
- schedules of works
- supervision of works
- re-inspection
- detailed specific issue reports; and
- market valuation (after repairs).

**2 The surveyor** – the service is to be provided by an AssocRICS, MRICS or FRICS member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, who has the skills, knowledge and experience to survey, value and report on the property and is a member of the RICS Valuer Registration Scheme.

**3 Before the inspection** – you tell the surveyor if there is already an agreed or proposed price for the property and if you have any particular concerns (such as plans for extension) about the property.

**4 Terms of payment** – you agree to pay the surveyor's fee and any other charges agreed in writing.

**5 Cancelling this contract** – nothing in this clause 5 shall operate to exclude, limit or otherwise affect your rights to cancel under the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013 or the Consumer Rights Act 2015, or under any such other legislation as may from time to time be applicable. Entirely without prejudice to any other rights that you may have under any applicable legislation, you are entitled to cancel this contract in writing by giving notice to the surveyor's office at any time before the day of the inspection, and in any event within fourteen days of entering into this contract. Please note that where you have specifically requested that the surveyor provides services to you within fourteen days of entering into the contract, you will be responsible for fees and charges incurred by the surveyor up until the date of cancellation.

**6 Liability** – the report is provided for your use, and the surveyor cannot accept responsibility if it is used, or relied upon, by anyone else.

## **Complaints handling procedure**

The surveyor will have a complaints handling procedure and will give you a copy if you ask. The surveyor is required to provide you with contact details, in writing, for their complaints department or the person responsible for dealing with client complaints. Where the surveyor is party to a redress scheme, those details should also be provided. If any of this information is not provided, please notify the surveyor and ask that it be supplied.

### **Note: These terms form part of the contract between you and the surveyor.**

This report is for use in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Channel Islands and Isle of Man.

# Helping you choose the right survey

Why do you need an RICS Home Survey? Because forewarned is forearmed. Choosing the right survey will help highlight any serious problems and advise you of the specific risks before you commit to the process of buying or selling a property.

RICS has three different levels of survey (outlined overleaf). These can only be conducted by an RICS qualified surveyor.

Reliable and cost effective, these reports carry the full weight of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors – the industry's most respected authority on surveying.

## Buying a home

It's important to remember that your mortgage lender's valuation report is not a survey. It merely tells your lender whether or not the property is reasonable security for your loan. An RICS survey will tell you the actual condition of the property. That's vital information that can be invaluable during price negotiations, and will also help you avoid expensive surprises after you've moved in. There is an option for an RICS HomeBuyer Report (Survey level 2) which also includes a valuation as a standard part of the service for your own purposes.

## Selling a home

An RICS survey can be an aid to selling your home. It will show you any problems that may delay your sale or cause price reductions later in the process.

## Staying at home

A survey of the current condition of your home will warn you of defects and help you avoid escalating repair and maintenance costs in the future.

# Buying or selling? Survey your options

## The RICS Condition Report – survey level one

Choose this report if you're buying or selling a conventional house, flat or bungalow built from common building materials and in reasonable condition. It focuses purely on the condition of the property by setting out the following:

- clear 'traffic light' ratings of the condition of different parts of the building, services, garage and outbuildings, showing problems that may require varying degrees of attention;
- a summary of the risks to the condition of the building; and
- advice on replacement parts guarantees, planning and control matters for your legal advisers.

An RICS Condition Report is straightforward and does not include a valuation, but your surveyor may be able to provide this as a separate extra service.

Ask your surveyor for a detailed 'Description of the RICS Condition Report Service' leaflet.

## The RICS HomeBuyer Report (Survey) – survey level two

Choose this report if you need more extensive information whilst buying or selling a conventional house, flat or bungalow, built from common building materials and in reasonable condition. It costs more than the Condition Report but includes:

- all of the features in the Condition Report;
- a list of problems that the surveyor considers may affect the property;
- advice on repairs and ongoing maintenance;
- issues that need to be investigated to prevent serious damage or dangerous conditions;
- legal issues that need to be addressed before completing your purchase; and
- information on location, local environment and the recorded energy efficiency (where available).

Ask your surveyor for a detailed 'Description of the RICS HomeBuyer (Survey) Service' leaflet.

## The RICS HomeBuyer Report (Survey & Valuation) – survey level two

As the RICS HomeBuyer Report (Survey) above but includes:

- the surveyor's professional opinion on the 'market value' of the property;
- an insurance reinstatement figure for the property;
- a list of problems that the surveyor considers may affect the value of the property;

Ask your surveyor for a detailed 'Description of the RICS HomeBuyer (Survey & Valuation) Service' leaflet.

## The RICS Building Survey – survey level three

Choose the Building Survey (formerly called a structural survey) if you're dealing with a large, older or run-down property, a building that is unusual or altered, or if you're planning major works. It costs more than the other RICS reports because it gives detailed information about the structure and fabric of the property.

The RICS Building Survey uses the same traffic light ratings as the Condition and HomeBuyer Reports. It also includes:

- a more thorough inspection and detailed report on a wider range of issues;
- a description of visible defects and potential problems caused by hidden flaws;
- an outline of repair options and the likely consequences of inactivity; and
- advice for your legal advisers and details of serious risks and dangerous conditions.

The RICS Building Survey does not include a valuation, but your surveyor may be able to provide this as a separate extra service.

Also the surveyor may be able to provide an estimate of costs for identified repairs if agreed with you in advance.

Ask your surveyor for a detailed 'Description of the RICS Building Survey Service' leaflet.

## At-a-glance survey comparisons

This table will help you choose the most appropriate survey, but if you have any particular requirements, remember to discuss them with your surveyor before they inspect the property. The surveyor may be able to provide you with extra services, under separate contracts.

Service features	Survey Level 1 RICS Condition Report service	Survey Level 2 RICS Homebuyer Report (Survey) service	Survey Level 2 RICS Homebuyer Report (Survey & Valuation) service	Survey Level 3 RICS Building Survey service
Describes the construction and condition of the property on the date of the inspection.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Aims to identify any problems that need urgent attention or are serious.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Aims to identify things that need to be investigated further to prevent serious damage.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Aims to tell you about problems that may be dangerous.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Aims to show up potential issues and defects, before any transaction takes place.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Aims to help you decide whether you need extra advice before committing to purchase		✓	✓	✓
Aims to enable you to budget for any repairs or restoration.		✓	✓	✓
Aims to advise you on the amount of ongoing maintenance required in the future.		✓	✓	✓
Provides a reinstatement cost to help you avoid under or over-insurance.			✓	
Provides a market valuation.			✓	
Aims to establish how the property is built, what materials are used and how these will perform in the future				✓
Aims to describe visible defects, plus exposing potential problems posed by hidden defects.				✓
Aims to outline the repair options and give you a repair timeline, whilst explaining the consequences of not acting.				✓
Where practical and agreed, provides an estimate of costs for identified repairs.				✓
Provides specific comments on energy efficiency.				✓

Note: Extra services can be provided with all surveys but will require a separate contract.

For more information, visit [rics.org/homesurveys](https://www.rics.org/homesurveys)