



Guide to moving house...



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Introduction

Buying a house is exciting. It can also be stressful, so the aim of this guide is to help you navigate the process of acquiring what is likely to be your most valuable asset.

“We are an independent firm of Chartered Surveyors and since 1999 have provided professional advice to thousands of people making a home move.”

Selling Your Home

Many people think that selling their home is purely a matter of instructing an estate agent, putting up a board in the front garden and getting the particulars on an online portal. We believe that before you even pick up the phone to your local agent, it's worth spending some time and possibly money to ensure that your property is presented in the best possible light. Many of the items on the list below are common sense and you may well have heard them before, but in our opinion they really do make a difference.

- De-clutter. You want your house to feel as spacious as possible. Pack things away into boxes and ask friends or relatives to store them until you move if you really can't part with them.
- Clean the windows. Inside and out!
- Make the bathroom gleam. Buy lime scale remover if necessary and polish the taps until they sparkle. Store functional toiletries/ cleaning products out of sight and display attractive bottles that complement the colour of the room. Consider buying a new set of towels that only come out for viewings.
- Clean the kitchen, including the hob, the floor, and the cupboard doors. Don't cook fish or curry before a viewing!
- A vase of flowers on the table really lifts a room - in photos and for viewings.
- Tidy the garden; cut the grass, prune any shrubs or bushes, sweep the paths and patio. Pots containing dead plants can look depressing. Get rid of them or replant them with something attractive – you can take them with you when you move after all.
- Sort out any minor issues or repairs – but do it properly and if necessary get in touch with a reputable local builder. Don't give your vendors easy reasons to negotiate later on! Don't be tempted to try and disguise problems; a surveyor is likely to find them and it can be embarrassing.
- Stand in the road and look at your house. Does the front door need repainting? Is there somewhere better to store the bins? First impressions count.

Estate Agents

It's a good idea to invite two or three agents to value your home and to discuss what they do and don't offer for their fee. Occasionally agents might give a flattering valuation to tempt you to instruct them – if this happens you can expect limited viewings and within weeks they will be suggesting you lower the price. A good agent should always aim to value the property at the level at which they realistically expect you to achieve a sale. They may then suggest marketing at a slightly higher price to allow for negotiation. Ask your agent how long they are currently taking, on average, to achieve a sale.

Typically you should expect your estate agent to offer the following:

- Full colour sales particulars (some may charge extra for floorplans) both in print and also digital format for emailing
- Shop front display advertising
- For Sale boards
- Online presence on a major portal and usually their own website
- Accompanied viewings followed by feedback to vendors
- After sale care, i.e. liaising with the rest of the chain, ensuring transactions are completed as quickly as possible

The after sales care that you receive from a good agent is often overlooked. The longer it takes for a sale to progress to exchange of contracts once an offer has been accepted, the greater the chance it will fall through. Your agent should “chase” the sale on your behalf, contacting other parties in your chain, if you have one. There are now online only agencies offering a fixed fee service. On the face of it these would appear to represent a good saving, however bear in mind that you are unlikely to get the full range of services that a local high street agent can offer.

Purchasing

Your first step should be to register your details with all the local agents in the area you want to buy. Be as specific as possible in terms of what you are looking for. It's worth visiting agents in person to register, and make sure you know the names of everyone you deal with. When they receive details of somewhere suitable they are more likely to think of you first if they can put a face to your name.

Don't make the mistake of thinking you can just check online every day and see what new properties have come on. Agents will have already sent particulars out to potential buyers who have registered with them before the property appears online. If you want to be the first to know, then make sure your agent has your mobile number and email address.

Make it clear whether or not you have a mortgage arranged in principle or finance available and whether or not you are in a chain, i.e. you are dependent on someone buying your existing home and whether they are dependent on someone buying theirs etc etc

Stay in touch. Ring or call in at least once a week to keep yourself at the forefront of their mind.

What to look out for

When you go to view a property take a pencil and paper to make notes with and a tape measure. You might also want to consider taking a few photos of rooms that might not feature in the sales particulars, especially if you're viewing several properties on the same day. Don't allow yourself to feel rushed and feel free to wander round two or three times if you want to. We've included a viewing notes form at the end of this guide for you to use if you want to.

A few things worth considering:

- Location– you'll be able to change a great deal, but not the location!
- Position – the way the property is orientated. Remember east facing rooms will get the morning sun, west in the afternoon and evening and south, most of the day. Are you overlooked?
- Light – do any tall trees or buildings block the light? Trees may be able to be pruned. If this is important, check that they are not covered by a TPO. An empty property with no curtains will seem lighter than one with curtains, even pulled back.
- Internally – would the layout work for you? Bear in mind that rooms with sloping ceilings or irregular shapes can make furniture placement awkward. If you have a particular piece of furniture that has to be accommodated go armed with its dimensions and check.
- Noise – open the windows and listen. How much traffic noise is there? Is it close to a school which might be busy at certain times of the day?
- Services – how is it heated? Is mains gas available? Are the electrics reasonably modern? Is it connected to mains drainage?

Book a second viewing before making an offer. Try to visit at a different time of day to see how this affects light, noise, traffic etc.

Mortgages

Unless you're a cash buyer, get a mortgage arranged in principle before you start looking for a property. The better prepared you are, the more likely you are to be shown hot properties as soon as the agents hear about them.

The range of mortgages on offer can be bewildering and unless you are particularly confident in this area we would recommend that you approach an independent financial advisor for help in this regard.

Generally you should consider the following:

- How much can you afford to borrow? Lenders now carry out much more rigorous tests to ensure that borrowers do not overextend themselves. You'll need to take into account other living expenses such as car loans, credit card debt, gym membership etc. Your ability to continue to make repayments even in the event that interest rates rise will also be assessed.
- How much do you have as a deposit?
- Your loan to value ratio i.e the percentage of borrowed money against the value of the property. For example, if you're purchasing a property at £250,000 and wish to borrow £200,000 then your loan to value is 80% ($200,000 / 250,000 \times 100 = 80$). The lower your loan to value, the better the rate available for your mortgage.
- Other costs involved in the transaction: e.g. mortgage arrangement fee, stamp duty, solicitors' fees, estate agents' fees, surveyors fees, removal costs. Add them up now and include them in your budget.

Solicitors & Conveyancers

A good solicitor or licensed conveyancer can help speed up your transaction by ensuring that matters are attended to quickly and efficiently which should minimise the time between your offer being accepted and exchange and/or completion. It's worth getting quotes in advance (ideally three) so that you can instruct your chosen solicitor/conveyancer promptly as soon as you make or accept an offer. Remember that there may be additional disbursements and If possible, ask friends and family for recommendations.

What a Solicitor / Conveyancer will do for you

- Check with the land registry that the person selling the property actually owns it
- Check local authority information to establish if any new development is planned or whether there are any planning applications or significant environmental factors in the area
- Check the title deeds for information regarding boundaries, rights of way across the property and any guarantees on major works done to the property for example damp treatments, woodworm treatments, replacement windows etc
- Prepare for the transfer of ownership
- Arrange the signing of the contracts and exchange the contracts with the other side's solicitors. At this point both parties become contractually obliged to complete the sale
- Complete the contracts and arrange for the payment of money from buyer to seller.

Making an Offer

Once you have viewed the property, perhaps for the second or third time and have definitely decided that this is the one for you, then it's time to make an offer!

When working out how much to offer for a property, it's worth bearing in mind the following factors:

- How long it has been on the market
- When it last sold and for how much (this information is available online via land registry)
- What the vendor's situation is e.g. have they found somewhere to buy, do they need to move quickly etc.
- Whether any one has made an offer on the property recently and if so either why it was not accepted or why the transaction fell through.
- Whether there are any other interested parties who are considering making an offer.

When you put your offer forward via the estate agent, make sure you add the words "subject to contract" after the amount as it is technically possible that you may otherwise be making a verbal contract. It is also sensible to make your offer "subject to satisfactory survey" because if your surveyor uncovers defects or problems that require substantial outlay you may wish to renegotiate the purchase price. Work out what the maximum amount is that you are prepared and can afford to pay, then reduce it slightly to allow for negotiation.

Let the estate agent know what your position is – do you need to sell your property, is it under offer, are you a cash buyer or moving from rented accommodation? If you're in a position to move quickly then make sure you stress this as sometimes it's the fastest deal and not the highest price that attracts a vendor.

Surveys

In our opinion a survey is absolutely essential for all property purchases. Shockingly, only about 25% of purchasers have an independent survey carried out, meaning that the remaining 75% make what is likely to be their most expensive ever purchase without professional advice with regard to its condition. According to a report conducted by Bradford & Bingley, around 71% of those people who did obtain an independent survey then used it to negotiate a price reduction to reflect defects discovered by the surveyor, in most cases for considerably more than the cost of the survey itself.

These days, when many of us stretch our budgets to the absolute limit in order to buy a house, who can afford the worry and expense of expensive defects coming to light in the months or years to come? An independent survey provides peace of mind and, if any issues are flagged up, you have the opportunity to renegotiate the price you can afford to pay or even reconsider whether or not you still want to proceed. In the unfortunate event that you decide not to proceed with your purchase, clients of Now Chartered Surveyors have the comfort of knowing that if they instruct us to carry out a survey on another property, they will receive a 20% discount on the subsequent survey.

“But my lender has had a mortgage valuation survey carried out...”

People often think that this will alert them to any problems. This is not the case. The mortgage valuation report is carried out for the lender and not for the borrower. The lender simply needs to know that they have adequate security for their loan and a mortgage valuation report does not include a detailed inspection of the structure or condition of the property.

Types of Survey

At Now Chartered Surveyors we offer two types of survey:

HomeBuyer Report

This is produced in a standard format provided by the RICS and is designed to be a value for money package for the potential purchaser. It is suitable for houses, flats and bungalows of conventional construction, in reasonable condition and built after 1900. It will include details of defects which are significant and urgent and also covers the general condition of the property, particular points to raise with legal advisors and other considerations such as safety, location and environment.

Building Condition Survey

This survey is suitable for all types of property and recommended particularly where a property was constructed before 1900 or has been substantially altered or converted from buildings that originally had another use.

A Building Condition Survey is extensive and detailed and may be tailored to address client's individual queries or concerns. It will list all defects and will suggest remedies.

Should you still need further guidance on which survey is most appropriate for you, please download our [FREE GUIDE TO CHOOSING BETWEEN SURVEYS](#). This is also available on our website at www.now-survey.com. Alternatively, call us on 023 8022 4189 for further advice.

Removals

It can be tempting to try and save money by hiring a van and moving yourself. This can represent a big saving but is incredibly hard work and moving heavy furniture, especially up and down stairs, can be dangerous.

If you decide to use a removal company, then make sure that they are members of the British Association of Removers and that they have adequate insurance. This gives you a chance of recourse in the event of any problems.

Never accept a quote over the telephone, always insist that somebody comes to your property to assess the amount of furniture and belongings that need moving (don't forget to show them the attic, shed and garage!) and that they give you a written quotation. We would always recommend that you obtain at least three quotations.

Friday is the most popular day for moving, so avoid it if you can and you might be able to get a cheaper rate.

Most firms will offer to pack your belongings for you (for a fee) – if you have a precious set of china or other delicate or valuable items then this is the best way to ensure that they arrive in one piece and fully insured.

If you do your own packing, you will need bubble wrap, newspaper, parcel tape and a large quantity of strong cardboard boxes. Make sure you don't fill boxes with heavy items such as books and label all boxes with their contents and the room that you want them to go into in the new property. Check with your removal company whether or not they will insure self-packed boxes – many will not.

Bear in mind that the moving day is likely to be stressful and choosing a friendly, co-operative and flexible removal firm will go a long way to easing this stress.

The BIG Day

A call to your solicitor first thing to check that all is in order is advisable. If you're using a removals firm then most of the morning will be spent watching them load the furniture and boxes onto the lorry – although you will probably be cleaning the house as they empty it and hoping that the same is being done for you at the other end!

Clearly, pets and children don't tend to help the process so if possible, keep them well out of the way. It's sensible to have snacks and drinks prepared in advance and consider packing a separate overnight bag containing the essentials so that you don't have to partially unpack several boxes just to brush your teeth and put your PJs on at the end of the day. In addition, it's a good idea to keep important documents such as house deeds, passports and birth certificates with you at all times rather than packing them in boxes.

Before you leave your old property, it is your responsibility to have a last check to make sure that nothing has been left behind and that no damage has occurred to walls, doors etc and to take final meter readings.

When you arrive at the new property, take meter readings and once you start unpacking, if you discover any breakages or damage, notify the removal firm as soon as possible.

Sample Viewing Form

Address	
Owners Name(s)	
Price of Property	
Date & Time of Viewing	
Estate Agency	
Agency Contract	
How Long Has The Property Been On The market?	
What Are They Selling?	

Quality of Exterior

	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
State of Repair					
Paintwork					
Windows					
Roof					
Garden					
Fences / Walls					
Drains / Gutters					

Quality of Interior

	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
Decor					
State of Repair					
Central Heating					
Wiring					
Plumbing					
Bathroom Suite					
Kitchen Fittings					

Feature

	Size	Comment
Hall		
Kitchen		
Living Room		
Dining Room		
Bedroom 1		
Bedroom 2		
Bedroom 3		
Bedroom 4		
Bathroom		
Parking		
Other		

Glossary of Terms

APARTMENT

See Flat

BUNGALOW

Single story dwelling

CHAIN

Situation arising where there is more than one transaction going on at the same time. For example A is buying a house from B and B is trying to buy a house from C and C is trying to buy a house from D and so on. Often the transaction depends upon the whole chain being in a position to exchange contracts at the same time.

CHARTERED SURVEYOR

Property professional, a member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors a professional body that controls conduct and ensures the continuing professional development, education and training of all members.

COMPLETION

The time when all the legal and financial aspects of your purchase have been finalised and the day you can actually move in.

CONTRACT

Refers to the contract of sale between parties for a property transaction.

CONVEYANCER

Handles the legal side of a property transaction.

DETACHED

A property that stands alone in its own plot of land.

DUTCH AUCTION

is a type of auction where the auctioneer begins with a high asking price which is lowered until some participant is willing to accept the auctioneer's price, or a predetermined reserve price (the seller's minimum acceptable price) is reached. The winning participant pays the last announced price.

EQUITY

The difference between the value of a property and the amount of borrowing secured against it.

ESTATE AGENT

Someone who markets property on behalf of vendors.

EXCHANGE OF CONTRACTS

The point at which the buyer and seller commit themselves legally to go ahead with the property transaction (in England and Wales).

FLAT

Set of residential rooms which are part of a larger building.

FREEHOLD

Outright ownership of a property and the land it sits on.

GAZUMPING

When a buyer thinks that a purchase has been agreed but is beaten before contracts are exchanged by someone else offering a higher price.

LEASEHOLD

Ownership of a property for a set duration involving the obligation to pay ground rent to the owner of the land on which the property stands.

Glossary of Terms (continued)

LENDER

Whoever provides your mortgage, a bank, building society, local authority etc.

LOAN TO VALUE RATIO

The ratio between the amount of borrowings and the value of a property.

MAINTENANCE CHARGE

An amount payable by a Leaseholder for the maintenance and upkeep of common parts, gardens, the exterior of the building etc.

MAISONETTE

A flat with its own front door.

NEGATIVE EQUITY

When your borrowings against a property are larger than the value of the property itself, the gap is known as negative equity. It is usually the consequence of buying a property with a large loan ahead of a fall in the housing market.

PARTICULARS

The term used for Estate Agents' descriptions of property.

SERVICE CHARGE

See Maintenance Charge.

SOLICITOR (OR LICENSED CONVEYANCER)

In property terms the person responsible for carrying out the legal side of a property transaction.

SURVEYOR

See Chartered Surveyor.



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