

Getting a proper house survey should be mandatory

by Nick Cheek, Deputy Money Editor [Energy & Home](#) 12 November 2010 4 - 0



If you don't get a proper survey done when you buy a new home, you could be looking at big bills further down the line – or worse. Is it time for full surveys to become mandatory?



I hate spending money – especially when I don't get anything tangible in return. **Library fines, TV licences**, booking fees – I loathe them all.

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I know I have to pay them, but I don't actually see anything for my money.

Don't rely on mortgage valuation reports

Worse than any of these is the mortgage valuation report you have to pay for when you buy a home. This is simply a confirmation to your lender that it will get its money back on your property if you can't pay. However, the valuation isn't a **survey** and won't tell you if there are any potential problems with the building.

Recent research from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) reports that a quarter of homebuyers are only having mortgage valuation reports instead of surveys – and it's costing them an average of £1,818 on unplanned building work after they move in.

This tallies with our own research from 2008, where less than 50% said that they'd had a proper survey and a quarter of people who'd bought homes in the past five years found faults after moving in.

But surely we wouldn't purposefully ignore problems that could cost us later? The RICS report went on to say that 58% of respondents wrongly believed that a valuation report covered the building's condition, including nasties such as damp and risk of subsidence.

Make surveys mandatory

Clearly, many buyers are unaware of how little they're getting from a valuation report – and just how much it can cost them in the long run. When we're buying a home, it's imperative to get either a homebuyer's report (which covers structural safety) or a complete building survey (which gives a more detailed report on the condition of the property).

If you watched any of Sarah Beeny's recent fear fest *Help, My House is Falling Down*, you'll have seen how few of the buyers had full surveys. Sadly (but not surprisingly) their homes were often infested with rats, sinking with subsidence or, in one case, flooding due to a unnoticed water well in the basement.

Ok, these were extreme cases that make for good viewing, but in my mind there's a simple way to avoid these problems – make surveys mandatory on all properties.

That way, we can all avoid nasty surprises and get on with the business of turning our homes into castles. Or, do you think this is just a way for surveyors to make more money and that it's down to the buyer to do their homework?

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