

SETTING THE STANDARDS IN RESIDENTIAL SURVEYING

Survey Inspection & Reporting Standards

Edition 1 v5.2 – November 2020



RPSA Survey Inspection Standard

This standard defines the inspection level required of RPSA members. It applies to all levels of survey.

RPSA members should carry out as full and thorough a non-invasive inspection as is reasonably possible to do, noting any limitations.

RPSA Survey Inspection Standard Guidance

The following is intended to assist a Surveyor in meeting the above standard. It has advisory status only. Whilst following this guidance ensures compliance with the standard it is also possible to meet the required standard in other ways. Should an RPSA member choose to operate other than in accordance with this guidance, the obligation will be on them to explain how their practices and inspection process meets the standard. Others within the profession may also find this guidance of use-

The guidance will apply to all levels of survey inspection as the standard required for all levels is the same. This guidance is not intended to list possible defects that can be found in each area but instead offer a level of inspection that should provide a Surveyor with sufficient detail to make an informed assessment of the condition of a property.

General

The following should apply where a Surveyor is operating under their standard terms of engagement. Where necessary or appropriate the Surveyor may agree a different level of inspection with the client and that agreed level should take precedence.

This may take the form of an addition to the Surveyor's Terms of Engagement, for example:

The main roof space of the subject property is to be excluded from the scope of the inspection. For all other elements the Surveyor will be following the inspection level detailed within the RPSA Survey Inspection Standard Guidance, Edition X, dated XXXXXX.

The purpose of this guidance is not to limit or replace the Surveyor's own experience and knowledge or to prevent a Surveyor taking reasonable steps to follow a trail of suspicion.

It is an overriding principle to the guidance that the Surveyor will not place themselves or others at unreasonable risk of harm and will endeavour to prevent or reduce damage to the property. The inspection should be considered non-invasive but some processes by their nature may cause minimal damage, such as the use of the prongs of an electronic moisture meter.

This guidance is based around inspections of residential properties as part of a purchase although it is applicable to inspections carried out for other purposes.

Equipment

Surveyors should use a range of portable equipment that allows them to carry out an inspection of the property consistent with the Survey Inspection Standards.

This should include, but is not limited to:-

Binoculars

Torch

Camera

Measuring devices, including tape measures and laser measures

Moisture meter

Ladder with a minimum extended height of 3.8 metres

A selection of minor tools which may include screwdrivers, pliers, crowbar and generic drain cover lifting tools, meter cabinet key and/or other items

Suitable Personal Protection Equipment relevant to the type of property being inspected and any other known factors

Additional equipment may be employed to assist in completing as full and thorough an inspection as is reasonably possible to do, for example:

Extended camera pole

Drones or other Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, subject to appropriate statutory permissions

Additional camera devices such as borescopes

Thermal imaging devices

Prior to using any equipment the Surveyor should carry out a risk assessment to consider likely damage to the property or surrounding properties, data protection or privacy of occupants or neighbours, and the risk of harm to the Surveyor, occupants or other members of the public.

Equipment should only be used where it can be done so with due regard to the health and safety of any individuals and protection of the property being inspected.

Pre-inspection

The Surveyor should carry out a reasonable degree of desk-based research prior to an inspection. Although proprietary and subscription services may be helpful, the expectation is that the Surveyor will primarily use publicly available and free-to-access online information. This information should include, but is not limited to:

Flood risk maps

Mining records

Oil and gas (including fracking) records and maps

Planning records

Information about the property made available by the Local Authority

Radon risk maps

Historic mapping

Energy Performance Certificates

Geological information

Land Registry information

Broadband speed availability

Historic England records

Estate agency and/or online property portal information

Chimneys

All chimney stacks to be visually inspected from ground level or vantage points such as balconies and terraces, using binoculars and a camera with sufficient zoom and image quality. If necessary, to follow a trail of suspicion, a ladder should be used up to a height of 3m where it can be done safely.

Roof Coverings

All pitched roof coverings to be visually inspected from ground level or vantage points such as balconies and terraces, using binoculars and a camera with sufficient zoom and image quality. If necessary, to follow a trail of suspicion, a ladder should be used up to a height of 3m where it can be done safely.

Flat roof coverings to be inspected either from a ladder, where this can be done safely, and the height is 3m or less, or from windows or other vantage points above. Flat roofs should only be walked on when an appropriate guard rail/balustrade is in place and confirmation has been provided that the structure has been constructed to hold the weight of a person. Where it is not possible to view the roof covering directly then, where possible, photographs should be recorded to make an assessment of the condition.

Rainwater and Above Ground Drainage Fittings

All rainwater and above ground drainage fittings to be visually inspected from ground level or vantage points such as balconies and terraces, using binoculars and a camera with sufficient zoom and image quality. If necessary, to follow a trail of suspicion, a ladder should be used up to a height of 3m where it can be done safely. It is not expected that a ladder will be used to inspect all rainwater and above ground drainage fittings if no defects are seen from ground level or the nature of any defects can be clearly established from ground level.

If the inspection takes place during a period of rain the Surveyor should note the presence of any apparent leaks.

Walls – External

All walls to be visually inspected from ground level or vantage points such as balconies and terraces, using binoculars and a camera with sufficient zoom and image quality. If necessary, to follow a trail of suspicion, a ladder should be used up to a height of 3m where it can be done safely. It is not expected that a ladder will be used to inspect all walls if no defects are seen from ground level or the nature of any defects can be clearly established from ground level.

Airbricks should be inspected for evidence of any blockages or obstructions to airflow. There is no expectation that claddings or wall finishes are removed unless otherwise agreed.

There is no expectation that the Surveyor will inspect within the wall cavity (if present) other than where there is some element of access, for example within a roof space or where there are gaps in the external face of the wall. A Surveyor may choose to use a borescope (with permission from the property owner, or where it can be used without causing damage) or thermal imaging device although these are not considered standard equipment in residential surveys.

Windows and External Doors

All windows and external doors to be visually inspected from ground level or vantage points such as balconies and terraces, using binoculars and a camera with sufficient zoom and image quality. If necessary, to follow a trail of suspicion, a ladder should be used up to a height of 3m where it can be done safely. It is not expected that a ladder will be used to inspect all windows and doors if no defects are seen from ground level or the nature of any defects can be clearly established from ground level. Exceptions can be made for flats where such an inspection may be an invasion of privacy. Such windows should be inspected from a reasonable distance without the aid of binoculars/camera.

Internally, all opening windows and doors should be opened where it is safe and reasonable to do so without the risk of damage to the windows, doors, or delicate or valuable objects located nearby. Where windows and doors are locked reasonable efforts should be made to locate keys. If any windows or doors cannot be opened, this should be noted by the Surveyor, along with the reason why.

External Joinery and Finishes

All external woodwork to be visually inspected from ground level or vantage points such as balconies and terraces, using binoculars and a camera with sufficient zoom and image quality. The inspection should include items such as railings, balconies and decorative items. The condition and safety of any fixing points should be noted. If necessary, to follow a trail of suspicion, a ladder should be used up to a height of 3m where it can be done safely. It is not expected that a ladder will be used to inspect all woodwork if no defects are seen from ground level or the nature of any defects can be clearly established from ground level.

Porches / Conservatories

A porch is defined as any enclosed structure attached to the property and surrounding an entrance that is not intended to provide living accommodation.

A conservatory is defined as any structure attached to the property constructed of primarily glazed sections and intended to provide living accommodation. This may also include structures described as orangeries or fully glazed sun/garden rooms. It may or may not be separated from the main building by an external quality door.

All porches and conservatories to be visually inspected from ground level or vantage points such as balconies and terraces, using binoculars and a camera with sufficient zoom and image quality. If necessary, to follow a trail of suspicion, a ladder should be used up to a height of 3m where it can be done safely. It is not expected that a ladder will be used to inspect all porches and conservatories if no defects are seen from ground level or the nature of any defects can be clearly established from ground level.

The Surveyor should apply the guidance for elements of the main building as noted above where appropriate to porch and conservatory structures.

Roof Space

Reasonable efforts should be made to enter all roof spaces with due regard to safety and avoiding damage to the property or possessions. Where present, it is appropriate to use fitted loft ladders for access, but the Surveyor is responsible for checking the condition and safety of the ladder prior to use. The use of any ladder over a height of 3m should be avoided. Within the roof space the Surveyor should only move in boarded areas or over exposed structural timbers where there is no reason to believe they will not take a reasonable load. If access is prevented due to the Surveyor's physical condition, then this should be noted both within the Surveyor's notes and within the final report.

The Surveyor may move small or light objects within the roof space to aid access, but in doing so must be mindful that personal possessions may be valuable or fragile, and may be delicately balanced, and so should exercise caution.

The Surveyor is not expected to remove boarding or insulation but may lift small areas of insulation to inspect the upper side of ceilings beneath.

All visual elements of the structure should be inspected along with the sarking or underside of the roof covering if exposed. For trussed rafter roofs the Surveyor should inspect a representative sample of the gang nails/plates. An electronic meter should be used to take a representative sample of moisture readings, with particular attention given to high risk areas, such as around chimney stacks and under valley gutters. The nature and suitability of any ventilation should be noted.

Where rot is found the Surveyor should make efforts to determine whether it is wet or dry rot. The Surveyor should not be expected to identify specific species of fungus.

The Surveyor should inspect for evidence of wood boring insect infestation although it is not considered necessary to inspect the full length of all timbers or moved stored items. Where evidence is noted the Surveyor should make all reasonable effort to determine the nature and extent of the infestation and whether there is a risk to the structure. The Surveyor should not be expected to confirm the species present.

Ceilings

All ceilings within the property should be visually inspected, including within cupboards and store areas. It may also be beneficial for the Surveyor to inspect the upper face of a ceiling where it is accessible, for example, from within the roof space, where access permits.

Walls - Internal

The Surveyor should visually inspect all accessible parts of the internal face of walls within a property, including within cupboards and store areas. Where necessary, to follow a trail of suspicion, a Surveyor may move small and light items of furniture and stored items but only where there is no risk of damage to the items or harm to the Surveyor. If possible, owner consent should be obtained prior to moving any furniture.

Masonry and plaster walls should be tested with the scan function of an electronic moisture meter. Readings should be taken at intervals of 1m both vertically and horizontally, where not obstructed by furniture, stored items and wall finishes.

Floors

The inspection of floors and flooring is usually limited by floor coverings and consequently the Surveyor is often restricted to noting any movement within the floor by walking the length and width of each room, where not prevented by furniture, fittings and structure. Where appropriate the Surveyor may also use items such as an electronic device, spirit level or marble / golf ball to judge the slope of a floor.

Where floor coverings are not present a representative selection of electronic moisture meter readings should be taken, with particular regard given to key areas, such as the edges near external walls and around external doors. The Surveyor should partially lift coverings to allow meter readings to be taken to follow a trail of suspicion, but only if coverings can be relaid in the same condition without the use of specialist tools or knowledge.

Chimney Breasts, Fireplaces and Flues

A visual inspection of all external elements of the chimney breasts, fireplaces and flues should be carried out by the Surveyor. Where possible accessible elements of the inside of flues should be inspected, using a mirror or camera where necessary. Fittings and seals to solid fuel stoves should be inspected.

Where chimney breasts have been removed the Surveyor should check the support of any remaining structure such as chimney breasts and stacks above. Where such support is hidden within the fabric of the building or otherwise inaccessible the Surveyor should inspect adjacent or connected areas for evidence of movement.

Built-In Fittings

The Surveyor should visually inspect all kitchen and utility room units along with all fitted wardrobes and cupboards. Approximately 50% of all kitchen/utility room cupboards and drawers should be opened and checked for operation. All fitted wardrobes should be opened and checked for operation.

Internal Joinery

The Surveyor should walk up and down all staircases and inspect all visible elements. Where access is possible the stair structure should also be inspected. The integrity and security of any handrails, railings or balustrades should be checked using levels of force associated with everyday normal use. All fixings and anchor points should be inspected.

Skirting boards should be visually inspected and tested using the prongs of an electronic moisture meter. Readings should be taken at approximately 1m intervals where access permits.

Bathroom and Sanitary Fittings

All bathroom and sanitary fittings should be visually inspected and checked for secure fixing. All toilets should be flushed, and taps and showers operated, where it is practical to do so, and the water supply to the property is active. The Surveyor is not expected to operate showers if access to the controls requires the Surveyor to be within the spray area of fixed outlets. The Surveyor is not required to remove any fixed or secured panels unless otherwise agreed.

Checks should be made to assess the general levels of flow, and whether hot water is available at hot taps (assuming the domestic hot water system is active).

Internal common parts

The Surveyor should assume that the common parts include all areas accessible from the subject property, main entrance and grounds where there is no evidence to suggest the area is demised to a different property. The Surveyor is not expected to familiarise themselves with the details of the common parts contained with any lease to the property.

All such areas should be visually inspected in a similar manner as described elsewhere in relevant sections of this guidance although the use of an electronic moisture meter should be more limited with readings only taken where necessary to follow a trail of suspicion.

Alongside the inspection of the physical elements, the Surveyor should also inspect any Management Company/Freeholder documentation found within the common parts. This could include but not be limited to:

- Health and Safety Risk assessments
- Asbestos registers
- Servicing records
- Escape Plans
- Insurance documents

Electricity

An inspection of all visible elements of the electrical installation should be carried out by the Surveyor. This should include, but not be limited to, the following:

Electrical sockets, switches, light fittings, fixed electrical heating units, consumer unit, electricity meter, exposed wiring.

No testing of circuits or fittings should be carried out as part of the inspection although it is expected that the Surveyor will turn on a representative selection of lights. If the electricity supply to the property has been turned off, it should not be reactivated by the Surveyor without permission from the property owner/keeper/occupier.

Gas / Oil

An inspection of all visible elements of any gas or oil installation should be carried out by the Surveyor. This should include inspection of any meters or oil tanks.

If the supply to the property has been turned off, then it should not be reactivated by the Surveyor without permission from the owner/keeper/occupier.

Water

An inspection of all visible elements of the plumbing installation should be carried out by the Surveyor. No testing should be carried out, other than as described for the inspection of the Bathroom and Sanitary fittings. This should include inspection of any water storage tanks fitted to the system.

If the supply to the property has been turned off, then it should not be reactivated by the Surveyor without permission from the owner/keeper/occupier.

Heating and Cooling

The Surveyor should inspect any boilers, radiators, timers and controls, fixed electric or gas heating units. Where a district or communal heating system is present the Surveyor should only inspect those elements within the subject property.

Where it is safe and practical to do so the Surveyor should attempt to activate systems to check their operation in normal daily use. The Surveyor should only operate/adjust controls that can readily be returned to their previous settings after carrying out checks.

The Surveyor should attempt to identify the make and model number of boilers and heaters and endeavour to form an opinion of their age based on information available from databases such as the Product Characteristics Database (PCDB), documentation present at the property, and information from sellers and other sources.

Drainage

The Surveyor is not expected to carry out a full CCTV inspection of the drainage system, however, a representative selection of inspection chamber covers should be lifted, and the chambers inspected, where it is safe and practical to do so. Where possible, the Surveyor should activate sufficient fittings to allow the flow of water through the chambers to be observed. Where covers are too heavy, obstructed, tightly fitted, cracked or damaged to lift safely, and without causing damage, this should be noted. It should be considered reasonable for the Surveyor to lift any covers that are secured with screws where such screws can be easily removed without damage to the screw heads.

The Surveyor should walk the length of the assumed drainage run assessing for any above ground evidence or suspicion of failure or damage.

Garaging & Outbuildings

The nature of the inspection of any garages or outbuildings will vary considerably according to the construction, attachment, size and permanency of the structure in question.

Where garages and outbuildings are present they should be inspected by the Surveyor, inside and out, so as to form an impression of their condition and suitability for their anticipated use.

Grounds

The Surveyor should have sufficient knowledge of the extent of the title to the property to make a reasonable judgement of the location of the boundaries, although this should not be considered a full boundary determination. Access to the Title Plan may be useful but should not be considered essential.

As far as possible all parts of the grounds should be assessed by the Surveyor in a general sense, with any exceptions or limitations noted.

External common parts

The Surveyor should assume that the common parts include all areas accessible from the subject property, main entrance and grounds where there is no evidence to suggest the area is demised to a different property. The Surveyor is not expected to familiarise themselves with the details of the common parts contained within any lease to the property.

All such areas should be visually inspected in a similar manner as described elsewhere within relevant sections of this guidance.

Neighbourly and local matters

The nature of any matters associated with neighbouring properties, features, installations, facilities and services will vary considerably from one property to another. The Surveyor should note any factors which, in the Surveyor's opinion, might have an unusual impact on an occupant's reasonable enjoyment of the property. The Surveyor is not required to record matters which would be considered as normal within the environment in which the property is located. For example, the Surveyor would not record that the property sits on a normal suburban side street, but might report that it is on a busy main road, which carries heavy goods vehicles and buses, and that a street lamp is present directly at the front of the property.

RPSA Survey Reporting Standard

This standard is intended to define the reporting levels required of RPSA members.

Provide a written report describing the construction and condition of each element of the property in sufficient detail so as to inform a reader assumed to have only basic knowledge of building construction and pathology. The report to include the following, dependent on level.

	Home Survey*	Building Survey*
Images (minimum)	20	40
Condition ratings	✓	✓
Summary of main issues	✓	✓
Environmental information	✓	✓
Conveyancer information	✓	✓
Health & Safety matters	✓	✓
Potential or hidden defects		✓
Advice on repairs		✓
Maintenance advice	✓	✓
Long term repairs		✓
Estimate of anticipated lifespan of key elements		✓

The titles “Home Survey” and “Building Survey” are used here to indicate the level of reporting content and detail relevant to each type of report. Surveyors may use other titles for their reports but must indicate the level of report being provided by reference to these standards. For example, a report may be identified with the phrase “The format of this XXXXXX report is consistent with the guidance requirements for a Home/Building[delete as applicable] Survey as defined by the RPSA Survey Inspection & Reporting Standards Edition 1 v5.x”

Survey Reporting Standard Guidance

The following is intended to assist a Surveyor in meeting the above standard. It has advisory status only. Whilst following this guidance ensures compliance with the standard it is also possible to meet the required standard in other ways. Should an RPSA member choose to operate other than in accordance with this guidance the obligation will be on them to explain how their practices and reporting process meets the required standard. The guidance will apply to all levels of survey as the standard required for all levels is the same.

General

The purpose of the report is to provide the client with useful and relevant information, so they can make an informed decision about the purchase of a property, and any repairs that may be required. The Surveyor should have this in mind when writing the report and consider how information may be used by the client.

The Surveyor may want to consider questions such as:

Will this be understandable to the client?

Is the information relevant to the property and level of report?

How will the client use the information provided?

Is the information open to misinterpretation?

Is the language used unbiased and impartial?

As far as possible the Surveyor should ensure that the report is written in plain, non-technical language without unnecessary jargon. There are occasions when the use of technical terms is necessary, and these should be clearly explained. Often this can be beneficial to the client as it may allow them to better understand further reports or quotes where such terms may be used without explanation. Where possible such explanations should be accompanied with diagrams or annotated images.

Other than when describing specific limitations, the Surveyor should not include, by default, passages of text intended to caveat responsibility over and above that described in their Terms of Engagement.

The Surveyor's attention is drawn to the following which are all intended to help the client obtain the greatest benefit from the report. Where applicable, the Surveyor should:-

Ensure that the reader can readily identify the location, content and specific detail of photographs.

Include text to describe defects, features or issues identified in photographs.

Use simple drawings or diagrams to augment descriptions of more complex construction styles and system installations.

Carry out careful proof reading to reduce the inclusion of typographical and grammatical errors. The use of online support tools is recommended, for example, Grammarly.

Ensure that names or references given to features or parts of the property are used consistently throughout the report.

This guidance is based around inspections of residential properties as part of a purchase although it is applicable to inspections carried out for other purposes.

Images

A minimum of 20 images to be included for a Home Survey report and 40 images for a Building Survey. This is a minimum value and more can be included but the Surveyor should bear in mind that all images should be useful or relevant. Repeated images of similar items may not be helpful. The Surveyor should aim to provide at least one image per element.

The purpose of these images is to both provide a client with a better understanding of any defects, and to enable them to identify specific elements of the building that may be referred to within the report. Where appropriate, images should be annotated to ensure clarity and the Surveyor should reference images within the text where this will aid the client in understanding an issue.

Pre agreed limitations

Where the Surveyor has been instructed by the client to exclude areas or elements of a property from the survey, these should be clearly detailed within the report, preferably towards the beginning. If possible, plans should indicate the excluded areas. It should be possible to understand the full nature of any pre-agreed limitation without reference to any documentation not contained within the report.

Caveats and limitations

Whilst the Surveyor should try to provide the client with as much information as possible, there are situations where a Surveyor is unable to report on the condition of an element, or where they are only able to report on part of an element. This may be due to a lack of access, or because specialist testing is required, for example, the condition of electrical cabling. In these cases the Surveyor should clearly detail the limitation. For a Building Survey the Surveyor should detail the potential defects or problems that could be present, for example, failure of a flat roof where there is no evidence of recent recovering.

Whilst the Surveyor will use their best efforts to inspect all elements of the property, and provide information as to their condition, sometimes this is not possible. This could be because there is no access, or such inspection would require damage to the property. In these cases, a Surveyor may recommend further investigations, but only where there is good reason to suspect a specific issue or defect exists. The Surveyor should then detail this within the report, including reference to the evidence that has led them to suspect the defect. For a Building Survey the Surveyor should detail the nature of the further investigation required, and the likely repairs if the suspected defect is present.

The Surveyor will avoid the use of standard caveats purely to reduce liability. Only where a reasonable level of inspection is not possible and there is good reason to suspect a specific defect should the Surveyor recommend further investigations.

Conflict of interest

The Surveyor should detail any potential or actual conflicts of interest. This may include any connection with other parties to the transaction although acting for the seller in a related purchase is not normally considered a conflict. The Surveyor should also detail any referral fee paid or received in relation to the instruction.

About the Property

The Surveyor should briefly describe the nature and construction of the property.

Other relevant factors should be reported and may include, but are not limited to, information about:

- Estimated age of the building
- Estimated age of extensions or major alterations
- Planning records

- Listed building status
- Conservation or other designated areas
- Weather conditions prior to and during the inspection
- Connected services
- Broadband availability
- Facilities in addition to the main dwelling

Summary and Issues

The report should contain a summary of the main issues identified by the Surveyor as well as an indication of the overall condition of the property. It should be clear that this is a summary only and that the client must read all the sections of the report before making any decisions. References should be made to the relevant sections within the report.

Elevation Images

The report should include an image of each accessible elevation and these should be labelled with terms that are then used consistently throughout the report, for example front/rear or north/south. It is important to ensure that a client can identify the correct elevation from the terms within the report.

Summary of Accommodation and floorplan

A breakdown of the number of each type of room within the property should be included. This should also be accompanied with a floorplan including room names. This can either be drafted by the Surveyor or taken from publicly available sources.

Energy Performance

Most residential properties should have an Energy Performance Certificate and the Surveyor should review a copy prior to the survey. Whilst the Surveyor is not expected to have a full working knowledge of the RdSAP process or hold a qualification as an Energy Assessor, they should have a good understanding of the energy efficiency and environmental performance of residential buildings.

Any specific issues within the EPC, such as inaccuracies that fall outside the general limitation of the RdSAP process, should be detailed. These might include incorrect assessments of the construction type or details of work undertaken after the lodgement of the EPC. Where recommendations made within the EPC may not be suitable for the property, such as the installation of cavity wall insulation in a coastal location, or double glazing in a listed property, then this should be brought to the client's attention within the report.

Reinstatement Cost

The provision of a reinstatement cost is considered an optional extra as most Buildings Insurance is provided using standard levels of cover. If included the reinstatement cost should be accompanied with text to make it clear the purpose of the figure and the distinction between reinstatement cost and a valuation.

Environmental

Environmental factors that may affect the subject property should be listed within the report along with an indication of risk and likely harm where applicable.

These factors may include, but are not be limited to:

- Flooding
- Geology
- Contamination
- Radon
- Fracking/oil and gas exploration/mining issues
- Invasive species
- Landfill

Conveyancers

Although the Surveyor is not expected to be a property law specialist, they should have sufficient knowledge to act as the conveyancer's "eyes and ears" at the property, and identify a range of legal issues that may have a bearing on the transaction. These may include, but not be limited to:

- Rights of way
- Easements/wayleaves
- Unclear boundaries
- Flying freeholds
- Extensions and alterations
- Evidence of letting/subletting
- Tenure

Health and Safety

Reports at all levels must contain a separate section listing any relevant and significant risk to health and safety. Risks should be clearly identified, and an indication of the severity provided. Where a risk is also outlined elsewhere within the report, for example under a specific building element, then this should be cross referenced. It is often beneficial to have a risk detailed more than once in a report to ensure it is clear to the client, but it is important that the client could not mistakenly interpret these as separate issues. Consideration may also be given to known factors that may increase health and safety risks, for example, if the Surveyor is aware that his/her client has young children who would be at greater risk from, for example, an unprotected pond in the garden.

Valuation

These standards apply to reports produced to detail the condition of a property and do not relate to valuations for secured lending or otherwise. Current industrywide standards such as RICS Valuation – Global Standards, should be used where applicable

Construction

All reports should detail the essential construction of each element of the subject property, with sufficient detail to allow the client to understand the nature of these types. Diagrams and images may be helpful to clarify any details to the client. Where the type of construction is unclear the Surveyor should specify the possible type(s), with details of how and why assumptions have been made. For example, where the wall construction cannot be confirmed but is assumed based on wall thickness and the age of the property.

Nature of inspection and limitations

The Surveyor should specify the nature of the inspection carried out under each element, even where this may be a repeat of earlier statements and information contained within any terms of engagement. Where specific limitations affected the inspection then these should also be detailed.

Condition

Surveyors must use the following condition rating system:

Condition rating 1 – No repairs are presently required. Normal maintenance is required.

Condition rating 2 – Some repairs or replacements are necessary, though they are not considered to be of a very serious, urgent or dangerous nature.

Condition rating 3 – Serious or urgent works are required, or the client should arrange for further investigations before exchange of contract.

Condition rating HS – This indicates that a potential health and safety risk has been identified under this element. Some action is required although it may not warrant a condition rating 3. For example, there may be no evidence of servicing to the boiler or electrical installation, but no further defect has been identified.

Condition rating NI - Not Inspected should be used where a specific limitation prevented inspection of an element or where it was previously agreed with the client not to include inspection of that element. In either event, a note as to the reason for non-inspection should be included.

Condition rating NA - Not Applicable should be used when a section of a standard format report is not relevant to the subject property. A note as to the reason why that section is not applicable should be included.

A condition rating system has been shown to provide a benefit to clients by giving them a clear visual indication of the significance of issues identified and as such should be used in all levels of report.

Surveyors should take a structured and methodical approach to condition rating and are advised to consider a formalised rating protocol. All reports must provide an explanation of the ratings used.

Although a condition rating is helpful to a client in determining how a defect may affect their purchase, the Surveyor should also include text detailing the nature of the defect, possible causes, identifying features and any limitations to the diagnoses.

The Surveyor should highlight to the client the importance of obtaining quotations for any repair, refurbishment or improvement works prior to exchange of contracts.

Action required

For a Home Survey report, it is sufficient to specify the action required in the terms of the condition ratings noted above.

For a Building Survey report the Surveyor should detail the nature of any works required, including advice of varying options if relevant. If further investigations are required, the Surveyor should explain the nature of these investigations and provide details of the type of specialist required. The Surveyor should not make direct recommendations of specific contractors or specialists, although, where relevant, they should point clients towards trade bodies or associations that may be of assistance.

The cost of remedial works is not considered to be a standard element of any level of report and these should only be included if pre-agreed with the client.

For a Building Survey report the Surveyor should also give an indication of the urgency of the works required and the implications of not carrying out the works. The surveyor should also give an indication of the approximate remaining lifespan of key elements of the building.

Potential or hidden defects

The level of inspection laid out in the RPSA Survey Inspection Standard is non-invasive and will by its nature prevent the Surveyor being able to fully investigate some elements of a property. However, where the Surveyor is providing a Building Survey report, they may report on potential or hidden defects. These are defects that the Surveyor suspects may exist due to factors such as the construction type, age and condition of the property. Any explanation of the potential defects should be accompanied with some indication of the likelihood that they exist. The Surveyor should be clear that the existence of these hidden defects cannot be confirmed. These defects should be considered as distinct from issues where further investigations are required to follow the trail of a known defect.

Maintenance advice

All reports should contain a level of general maintenance advice to assist the client in the decision-making process. For Building Survey reports the Surveyor should tailor this advice specifically for the nature of the subject property including, where applicable, an indication of the timescale and the typical effects that may be encountered where maintenance is not carried out correctly.

Cosmetic/Minor issues

Although the Surveyor may identify and record minor and cosmetic issues during an inspection these are excluded from the scope of all levels of report.

A minor issue is defined as one which it would be expected that an unqualified homeowner would attend to as part of their normal maintenance of the property and not requiring any specialist skill, knowledge or equipment.

A cosmetic issue is one that impacts only the visual appearance of the property, has no material impact on other elements of the property, and is unlikely to deteriorate to such a point that a more significant repair would be required.

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