

Friday 22nd May 2020

Cutting coronavirus confusion for residential surveyors

Looking at forums and online discussions, there still seems to be some confusion about whether residential surveyors can return to work and, if so, how they should do it in accordance with Government guidance.

So, let's try to clear away the confusion, once and for all.

There are some fundamental issues that need to be considered first:-

1. It is for each individual surveyor to decide whether or not he/she wishes to carry out inspections, and we should respect those decisions. We all have individual situations or concerns that will determine our choices.
2. Anyone with symptoms, who is self-isolating, or is in a high-risk category (and it is the same if someone in your household falls within one of those descriptions) should not go to work.
3. It is important to establish that no one at the property you are visiting has any symptoms, is self-isolating, or is in a high-risk category. If they are then you should not visit the property.
4. Maintaining social distancing, and regular handwashing for at least 20 seconds, should form the basis of your approach to restricting the spread of Covid19.
5. As a professional, and as a matter of your normal routine, you should carry out a risk assessment prior to commencing any inspections, and should continually review that assessment during the course of your inspection. That assessment should include consideration of the health and safety concerns associated with Covid19.

Following changes to Government guidance, the RPSA issued guidance for members, developed in collaboration with the wider surveying community, [RPSA Covid19 guidance](#)

Below you will find links and quotes to the relevant Government documents and advice about how we should undertake our work. The RPSA have been very active over the lockdown period in communicating with Government, and the wider industry, which means that, as a sector, we have been "singled out" with really clear and unambiguous guidance. I have no doubt that RPSA involvement in those discussions was beneficial in the outcome.

On a wider basis, though, the Government have given us a clear direction to follow insofar as they have deemed it suitable for us to return to work, both in occupied and unoccupied properties. This guidance was issued on 11th May and can be found [HERE](#)

This guidance specifically mentions surveyors...

"This guidance applies to those working in, visiting or delivering to home environments.

These include, but are not limited to, people working in the following areas:

*in home workers – such as repair services, fitters, meter readers, plumbers, cleaners, cooks and **surveyors** (this is not an exhaustive list)"*

The guidance makes it clear that you should not go to work if you, or anyone at the property you are visiting, has any symptoms, are self-isolating or are in a vulnerable category.

You should *"Communicate with households prior to arrival, and on arrival, to ensure the household understands the social distancing and hygiene measures that should be followed once work has commenced."*

With regard to PPE the guidance indicates

"When managing the risk of COVID-19, additional PPE beyond what you usually wear is not beneficial. This is because COVID-19 is a different type of risk to the risks you normally face in a workplace, and needs to be managed through social distancing, hygiene and fixed teams or partnering, not through the use of PPE"

There seems to have been some confusion amongst surveyors about the requirement to only carry out "urgent" surveys and only on unoccupied properties. This instruction was included in the guidance published on 26th March, but was updated and replaced in revisions to that guidance most recently on 21st May [HERE](#)

It now states that

"Your surveyor can undertake surveys of the property you wish to purchase. There are no restrictions on the types of survey that can be carried out and you should talk to your surveyor to understand the most appropriate type of survey for the home you intend to purchase.

On custom and self build projects, surveyors can visit plots you wish to purchase and undertake valuations to support the release of staged payment mortgages.

Surveyors should not enter a property where a member of the household is showing symptoms of coronavirus or self-isolating.

Where possible we encourage inspections to take place by appointment only, with one person visiting the property at any time. Surveyors should follow government guidance for professionals working in other people's homes and guidance on social distancing.

If your home is being surveyed, you should ensure the surveyor has access to all the parts of the property they need to inspect, and make efforts to minimise contact with the surveyor, for example by staying in another room whilst they are inspecting your home."

I hope that helps you in determining your individual approach to returning to work.

As a professional association it is important for the RPSA to issue guidance to our members and I hope that we have done that clearly and simply.

As far as the RPSA panel is concerned, we are now accepting instructions on all properties, but we do respect individual surveyors' decisions not to accept instructions if they prefer not to.

Surveyors form a vital part of the house buying and selling industry which is a cornerstone of the UK economy. So, while our overriding interest must of course be the health and safety of ourselves, our colleagues, our clients and those we engage with in the survey process, providing a reliable and comprehensive service is of paramount importance.

Alan Milstein – Chairman

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