



Chartered property,  
land and construction  
surveyors



# Surveys of Residential Property

## Consumer Guide



# Surveys of Residential Property – Consumer Guide

## 1. What is a building survey?

A building survey is an inspection carried out to ascertain the general condition of a property. A building survey can be carried out by various professionals but it is very important that the professional you do engage is experienced and competent to do so.

A building survey will identify any obvious defects that would ordinarily be missed by the untrained eye, and report on these to the client whilst also outlining recommendations.



## 2. Why do I need a building survey to be carried out?

Purchasing a house is probably one of the biggest financial commitments a person will ever make. Therefore many potential property purchasers find solace and peace of mind engaging the services of a competent and experienced professional to carry out a pre-contract inspection to highlight any issues with the fabric of the building and report these to the client.

***“43% of potential house purchasers would instruct a professional to carry out a building survey”***

The Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland commissioned Red – C Research to conduct a survey of the public in order to ascertain how many potential house

purchasers would instruct a professional to carry out a building survey prior to signing contracts. The survey revealed that 43% of potential purchasers would commission a professional to carry out a pre-contract inspection of a property.

There can be occasions where a house has been purchased only to find out that there are numerous defects attributed to the property. These defects / issues can range from;

- Flooding risks
- Pyrite heave
- Issues pertaining to rising damp
- Poor workmanship during construction now becoming evident
- Structural issues
- Defective services

## 3. How do I know what type of survey I require?

Given that property categories and sizes can vary substantially, the type of building survey on offer by Chartered Surveyors will often vary to reflect the needs and requirements of clients.

To avoid confusion in the market place, it is important that the public and their advisers

understand the type of service offered by Chartered Surveyors. The SCSi has issued guidance to Chartered Building Surveyors detailing the ‘types’ of surveys that should be made available to clients. By outlining three different types of service commonly offered by Chartered Building Surveyors, this document provides a common

vocabulary that can be used by Chartered Surveyors and clients when agreeing the terms of engagement of their contract.

***“An industry benchmark....the client is fully aware of the type of reporting .... being purchased.....informed decisions when retrieving quotations from professionals”.***

These levels of service are not prescriptive or fixed and may be varied in whatever way members and their clients see fit. Instead, the purpose is to provide an open and transparent starting point for those discussions. The three levels of service are:

- survey type one
- survey type two; and
- survey type three

These ‘types’ will set an industry benchmark so that the client is fully aware of the level of reporting that is being purchased. This will enable the client to make an informed decision when retrieving quotations from various professionals.

### Survey Type One

This type of service includes a visual inspection and a report on condition of the building, its services and the grounds. It highlights relevant legal issues and any obvious risks to the building, people or to the grounds. The report is succinct and objectively describes the condition of the different parts of the building and provides an assessment of the relative importance of the defects/problems. Type One reports do not generally include advice on repairs or ongoing maintenance and so are better suited to conventionally built, modern dwellings that are in a satisfactory condition.

### Survey Type Two

This intermediate type of service includes a more extensive visual inspection of the building, its services and the grounds. Accessible concealed areas are inspected if it is safe to do so (typical examples include roof spaces and underfloor areas). The report objectively describes the condition of the different elements and provides an assessment of the relative importance of the defects/problems. Although the report is concise it does include advice about the repairs and any on-going maintenance issues.



This type of service suits a broader range of conventionally built properties. This type of service is unlikely to suit:

- Complex and/or unique, older properties,
- Those in a poor condition, or;
- Where the client is planning to carry out extensive repair and refurbishment work.



### Survey Type Three

This type of service consists of an extensive visual inspection of the building, its services and the grounds. Some concealed areas may be opened and accessed where it is safe and appropriate to do so and although the services are not tested, where possible, they are observed in normal operation (in other words, they are switched on and/or operated).

The report objectively describes the form of construction and materials used for the different parts of the property. It objectively describes the condition and provides an assessment of the relative importance of the defects/problems. This type of report is more extensive than Survey Type One and Two. This type of service will suit any domestic residential property in any condition.

## 4. What are the added advantages of having a building survey completed?

A building survey should be presented in a user friendly way, which can be easily understood by the lay person. It is very important that Chartered Building Surveyors relay any recommendations to the client in an appropriate way, for example, the report should separate out the essential repairs and the desired upgrades. This can be useful if you are considering upgrading the thermal efficiency of the house and many potential purchasers can refer to their building survey

report in order to address their concerns with the vendor or selling agent.

Building surveys are often an extremely useful service for vendors who are considering selling their property. Many vendors engage the services of a Chartered Building Surveyor to carry out a survey and any issues that arise can be dealt with prior to the marketing of the property, thus alleviating any potential problems.

If you or your client is considering purchasing/selling a property and is interested in getting a building survey completed, your local Chartered Building Surveyor can be located on [www.scsi.ie/surveyors/surveyors\\_search](http://www.scsi.ie/surveyors/surveyors_search)



### Chartered Building Surveying Services

Building pathology

Building surveys

Dilapidations

Contract administration

Design

Project management



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Dating back to 1895, the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland is the independent professional body for Chartered Surveyors working and practicing in Ireland.

Working in partnership with RICS, the pre-eminent Chartered professional body for the construction, land and property sectors around the world, the Society and RICS act in the public interest: setting and maintaining the highest standards of competence and integrity among the profession; and providing impartial, authoritative advice on key issues for business, society and governments worldwide.

Advancing standards in construction, land and property, the Chartered Surveyor professional qualification is the world's leading qualification when it comes to professional standards. In a world where more and more people, governments, banks and commercial organisations demand greater certainty of professional standards and ethics, attaining the Chartered Surveyor qualification is the recognised mark of property professionalism.

Members of the profession are typically employed in the construction, land and property markets through private practice, in central and local government, in state agencies, in academic institutions, in business organisations and in non-governmental organisations.

Members' services are diverse and can include offering strategic advice on the economics, valuation, law, technology, finance and management in all aspects of the construction, land and property industry.

All aspects of the profession, from education through to qualification and the continuing maintenance of the highest professional standards are regulated and overseen through the partnership of the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland and RICS, in the public interest.

This valuable partnership with RICS enables access to a worldwide network of research, experience and advice.

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