

SELLING GUIDE

Things to consider before coming to the market

There are many different reasons for selling, from a growing family needing more space, through moving for jobs/schools, to disposing of an investment property and, of course, sometimes people just get 'itchy feet' and want to move to a new property. Whatever your individual reason may be, once you have decided to sell up there are a few things you could do to get ready to market your home;

Gather useful documents together and let us know useful facts about your property which we can mention to potential buyers, such as:

- Gas and electrical servicing details or inspection certificates.
- Building regulations certificates.
- Council tax, utility, buildings and contents insurance bills - so potential buyers can estimate running costs.
- Service charges and ground rent bills (where appropriate)

Are there any important facts that would not necessarily be known about your home; such as private roads or drains that have shared responsibility or maintenance cost?

You should think about what you want to include in the sale. Normally, fixtures and fittings such as fitted storage heaters, fitted appliances are included in the price but other moveable things can be up for negotiation such as washing machine, dishwasher and even items of furniture. If you are disposing of items you no longer need, do it before you start marketing your property as the less clutter you have the faster your house will sell. Don't forget that the council will take away large items, usually for a small fee.

Finally, it is important to be honest and open about your property during negotiations as many failed transactions are due to previously undeclared information coming to light following a survey or during conveyancing.

Preparing your home

Once you decide to sell you need to get your home ready for viewings and give your house the best chance of appealing to buyers. First impressions count so put yourself in the buyers' shoes and think about how you can enhance your property's appeal.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS - Consider your homes' "kerb appeal"; the first thing potential buyers will see before they even get to the front door. Here are some things to look out for;

- Does the front of your house need smartening up?
- Could the front garden be tidier?
- Would the front door look better with a fresh lick of paint?
- Could the front windows do with a clean?

Look at the inside with a critical eye too: Try this as an exercise, step outside your home and come back in as a potential buyer and see if anything looks out of place. Think about some of these points;

DECLUTTER - Keep it clean and tidy. De-clutter and use sensible storage. Potential buyers will want to visualise how they can fill the space and other peoples 'stuff' can be a big 'turn-off'. This is such an important part of selling your home we have given it its own section [here](#). (link)

ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE - Bring out the best features such as fireplaces and use mirrors to increase the sense of space. Make sure these features are clearly visible and attention is drawn to them.

ELIMINATE THE NEGATIVE - Undertake any minor repairs that need doing so buyers will need to really try hard to find any negatives. It's all too easy to overlook these things as relatively minor but now is the time to do them.

KEEP IT NEUTRAL - If you want or need to re-decorate, go for neutral tones, which will appeal to a wider audience and try to 'de-personalise' so that prospective buyers can see how they could feel at home.

SET THE THERMOSTAT - Make your house comfortable, cool on hot sunny days and warm if it's winter.

SMELL THE COFFEE - Banish smoke or pet odours. Open the windows, brew some fresh coffee and add finishing touches such as fresh flowers, to brighten the place up and keep it smelling fresh.

Decluttering

It is so easy to collect lots of 'stuff' in a very short space of time so, before you think of putting your house on the market, a 'declutter' is often really helpful. If nothing else, it really helps you come to terms with the fact that you are going to sell your house and move, which can be incredibly daunting even if you are looking forward to your next home.

Our advice is to ensure that you have a free weekend – get the kids looked after – call round a friend, get a bottle of wine ready (as a reward later!) and get to work!

Here are a few tips to get you on your way:

- Firstly clear your mind of personal attachment to the property. It's hard to do, but will help with the next steps.
- Try to de-personalize your house – rationalize your belongings and put away evidence of hobbies, photos etc.
- Tidy up the clutter and try to keep it that way – although everyone realises you still have to live there!
- Take a good look around the house and only keep the things that you really need (go through every room with a fine toothcomb).
- Take your unwanted items to a charity shop or look out for your local freecycle 'swapshop'.
- Consider using a storage facility for a short period whilst your property is on the market
- Remember first impressions count – the entrance hall sets the tone for the rest of the viewing, so don't use it as a dumping ground – clear the coats, hats, umbrellas and shoes.
- If you have a communal area - tidy and repaint, smarten it up.
- Use artificial light to highlight certain areas of a room to make it look more spacious, for example dark corners and hallways. Regularly check your bulbs too as an inoperative light can create dark patches.

- Keep window dressing to a minimum. This will maximize natural light by allowing it to flood in.

Well that will take you all day, so take a rest now, open up the wine and chill. Enjoy the look on everyone's faces when they come home.

Accepting an offer

Once you have received an offer, be prepared to negotiate. But remember, you don't have to sell to the highest bidder. A lower bidder might be better if they:

Are paying cash (so don't have to wait for mortgage approval)

Already have a mortgage "agreed in principle"

Don't have to sell a property first (they could be first-time buyers or investors) or are in a short chain

Can fit in with your timescales better than other buyers

Sales progression

Once a sale is agreed, the real work begins! Conveyancing is very time consuming and complex, so you will need to employ either a solicitor or a licensed conveyancer to do it for you.

Here are our top tips on choosing and using a conveyancer...

- Get at a few quotes. Ask friends, family and us for recommendations, but remember being the cheapest doesn't make them the best.
- Tell your conveyancer if you want answers to any specific questions in advance
- Let them know when you would like to exchange contracts and complete. Tell them you will require regular updates of how the sale is progressing
- Check and compare quotes carefully making sure they are like for like.

Once you have appointed a conveyancer, you will need to...

- Give them some basic information to get started such as your mortgage roll number - so they can check you own the property and proof of your ID
- Complete a detailed questionnaire on the property, covering things like 'who owns the boundaries' and 'whether you have had any disputes with neighbours'. Answers here form part of the Sale Contract so it is a legal requirement to answer accurately.
- Complete a form showing what fixtures and fittings are included in the sale.
- Answer conveyancing queries as soon as you can. Use registered post or deliver documents by hand.

Moving day!

Removals - It can be tempting to save a few pounds here by hiring a van and moving yourself, if you only have a few items and have the luxury of time to move then by all means do consider it but you will find that you will need a lot of help from friends and family and it will always take longer than you think. Our advice? Employing a professional removal firm is an investment in your sanity and very worthwhile on moving day. Ask your friends to recommend a professional removal firm - your belongings are precious so ask for references and use a firm with membership of the British Association of Removers.

Consider moving out and in on separate days so you don't have to squeeze everything into the same day, particularly if you are moving some distance away.

Leaving a few days before moving in will free up time to get essential work to your new home completed without needing to work around piles of boxes. It's a great time for carpet cleaning, decorating or any DIY projects that might be dusty like sanding woodwork or floorboards, replastering etc.

If you can, avoid moving on a Monday or Friday: they are the busiest days for moving as well as for traffic on the roads.

Remember to take meter readings on both properties on the day(s) of the move.

Set up your post to be redirected a few weeks before you move with the Royal Mail - a good precaution against identity theft.

While you still have an internet connection (it could be a few weeks before your new property is connected), download any instruction manuals from the manufacturer's website for your new appliances.

Prepare a note for the new owners explaining how things work and where they can find useful items such as the boiler switches, aerial sockets and alarm codes. A few kind thoughts will go a long way when it comes to mail redirection and injects some humanity into the whole process.