

ANNUAL PROPERTY HEALTH CHECK

In order to maintain the value of your home, it is important not only to modernise it internally, with the latest 'state of the art' fitments, but externally, it must remain wind and water tight, damp free and structurally sound.

An annual property health check, carried out by you, will be a worthwhile exercise and could possibly save you thousands of pounds in the long run.

Remember, do not undertake routine maintenance work at high level, unless you have experience or suitable equipment and are accompanied. There are many professional maintenance companies that can assist. Tips to consider:-

- Every spring time, clear any leaves, silt and plant growth from gutters, hopper heads, drainage channels and flat roofs. This process is also advisable doing in autumn, just after all the leaves have fallen.
- With the use of binoculars, check the cement pointing and lead flashings to your chimney stacks. Is the aerial or satellite dish upright and check that the brackets are not corroding.
- Look out for any slipped or missing slates, dislodged by the winter snow. Check that the ridge tiles are in position and that the cement fillets are sound.
- Check for blocked downpipes or cracked/warped gutters, visible by algae growth or staining on external walls, also visible by overflowing gutters, during heavy rainfall. Remove any tennis or other balls caught in the gutter, as they form the perfect downpipe blocker.
- At ground level, check the surface gullies are clear of leaves, twigs, gravel and children's toys. Lift manhole covers and check for a clear flow of surface and foul water.
- Check for any branch, ivy and bush growth, cutting back and pruning if necessary. First check if you are in a Conservation Area, or if the trees are protected, as otherwise permission is needed.
- Look at your main walls and if any unexpected cracking has occurred. It may be that a tree root is affecting the foundation or has entered a drain, either blocking or cracking it. If you see signs of this, engage a Chartered Surveyor to carry out a professional survey inspection, immediately.
- If you still have cast-iron gutters and downpipes, check for any corrosion or splits, using a mirror to check on the section nearest the main wall. Regular painting of cast-iron ensures it does not corrode and also keeps your property looking good.

- Fit bird guards/protectors to the tops of chimney pots, soil pipes and rainwater gutters, to prevent blockages.
- Consider snow protectors to roof gutters where a new conservatory or porch has been added.
- On a rainy day, carry out an internal inspection of your attic area and look out for any dripping water, stain water marks or visible daylight. These indicators, show that there is a problem and hopefully has not yet rotted the timber rafters of your roof.
- Internally, check the ground floor walls of your property for any signs of damp, fungal growth or a musty smell, which could be due to rising damp, blocked external gulley or a bridged damp proof course, externally.
- Remember to be vigilant and safe when carrying out your inspection, never work at heights, or use ladders, if you are alone. Always wear protective clothing, goggles and gloves.

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