

This guidance note has been issued by McCluskey Chartered Surveyors. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to homeowners in the UK. This document should not be considered in isolation and aims to offer an overview into property defects. Readers are advised to employ the services of a Chartered Surveyor when purchasing a property, or when you have concerns about the health of your home.

Top 10 maintenance tips for a healthy home

1. Ventilation

Increased ventilation throughout a property, especially between the months of October and April, can help to reduce condensation and any subsequent mould growth. Internally, this may include ensuring all windows are fitted with trickle vents. It is also important to ensure that roof spaces have adequate cross ventilation either from eaves, roof line or ridge vents. Where properties have a sub floor void, air bricks need to be kept clear and positioned approx. 150mm above external ground level to avoid water ingress.

2. Decoration

Keeping on top of decoration, both internally and externally prevents paint work deteriorating, and render/plaster debonding from the walls due to water saturation. Filling cracks and applying mastic around window and doors frames also helps to prevent water ingress and deterioration to surrounding building elements.

3. Chimney sweep

If your property has a gas fire, log burning stove, or an open fireplace, they should be inspected and serviced annually by a HETAS or Gas Safe Engineer. This will help prevent soot build up which could lead to issues releasing smoke and the chimney becoming blocked. Servicing helps prevent potential fires and helps make the appliances run more efficiently.

4. Clear gutters

Blocked gutters can lead to overflowing water and possible penetrating damp within the property via saturation of the walls, or potentially through the roof. It can also lead to vegetation growth which can worsen the problem – timber elements can decay quickly if subject to persistent saturation.

5. Clear roof

Moss and vegetation growth on roofs can lead to penetrating damp and similar issues as outlined above. Furthermore, during winter months, water held in the moss can freeze and lead to potential cracking and spalling of roof coverings. Clearing the roof and gutters is relatively inexpensive and can prevent damage to internal ceiling and wall finishes, and possible timber decay such as mould/fungal growth.

6. Electrical Service

A regular service by a qualified NICEIC Electrician ensures the safety of the current installation and provides a report of repairs and improvements that need to be made. All properties that have had significant building works undertaken to them, along with rental properties, should have a EICR certificate following a change of occupiers and new/improved works.

7. Boiler Service

As noted above, a regular service by a qualified Gas Safe Engineer ensures safety of the current installation. This helps to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, and ensure the boiler is working efficiently. It also identifies repairs and a possible date of replacement.

8. Repairs

Undertaking repairs can help to prevent additional defects that may occur as a result of not upholding general maintenance. For instance, staircase spindles and handrails can become loose and contribute to injury/falls. Furthermore, replacing gutter clips and repairing fascias and soffits can prevent leaks and water penetration.

9. Security

Locks, handles and window casements all suffer from wear and tear and should be maintained regularly, and replaced once the items' serviceable lifespan has passed. Failure to undertake maintenance to these aspects of your property may result in forced entry. It is possible that this may also lead to invalid insurance cover which would certainly not be desirable following a traumatic experience.

10. Safety

As above, failure to identify hazards within a property can result in potential injury (and claims for negligence) to people. A common safety issue is single glazing. Particularly in older properties, internal doors or shower screens do not always comply with BS12150 (toughened glass) and pose a risk to people as they shatter into large dangerous shards. Furthermore, broken spindles, loose handrails, loose and lifted pavers also pose hazards, among many others.

For more information, visit our website for the complete series of Guidance Notes.

