

Consumer Coronavirus (Covid-19) Guidance On Safe Home Moving

We have compiled a quick guide to moving home during COVID-19:
Information for buyers, sellers and renters.

To move home during the COVID-19 outbreak you need to know about the 'new rules' to make sure you move safely. This quick guide to moving home safely during COVID-19 will help you understand what you need to do, and what anyone involved in your move, whether it's one of our agents, a property lawyer, energy assessor, a valuer or surveyor, someone helping you organise your mortgage or the removal company who move you, will need to do to provide a safe environment for everyone.

This guidance is aligned with 'The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy' and the Government advice on home moving during the covid-19 outbreak.

No guidance can cover every scenario, especially as the current situation is evolving, so please take a pragmatic, common-sense approach to moving home during this time.

1. General guidance for different stages of the moving process

A. Before you move

Do you really need to meet in person? For the foreseeable future everyone needs to look for easy alternatives to physical meetings wherever possible so use digital technology, telephone contact, email and video-conferencing tools - whatever suits you best.

There will be times when you will need to meet us in person, for example, if you need to have a legal document witnessed and, in all cases, you must protect each other by following current social distancing guidelines.

However, if a meeting is required, wash your hands before and after using soap and water, dry them thoroughly, ideally with paper towels, and abide by the 2m (about 2 large strides) social distancing guidelines.

B. Documents, identity requirements, witnessing and signatures

When you buy, sell, or let property you will need to prove your identity, often to several different people, for example, your mortgage adviser, property lawyer and us. This can be done using electronic verification systems. Contracts can be electronically signed though your property lawyer may still post them to you to sign and return. Some legal documents need witnessing and your witness will need to be physically present. If you maintain social distancing and don't share pens, the risk can be minimised.

Precautions that you can expect from any property professional visiting your home

Where possible, they will:

- ✓ Use their own transport rather than public transport.
- ✓ Fill up cars at petrol stations using gloves and/or a paper towel.
- ✓ Use hand sanitisers before entering your home and when leaving.
- ✓ Not shake hands with you and maintain the 2m social distance.
- ✓ Use knuckles rather than fingers to touch light switches and other contact points.
- ✓ Declare COVID-19 symptoms and postpone any meetings, adhering to government and public health guidance (PHG) at all times.

Ask all present to declare any COVID-19 symptoms and adhere to government PHE guidelines. Any person selling, buying, occupying, or renting a home, together with everyone else working in the industry, is legally obliged to declare any COVID-19 symptoms immediately during a property visit.

C. Vulnerable people or those shielding

If you are in this category, please seek medical advice on whether your move should take place as during this period the government advice is *"staying at home and avoiding unnecessary contacts over this period, if at all possible."*

They also suggest that "All parties involved in home buying and selling should prioritise agreeing amicable arrangements to change move dates for individuals in this group, or where someone in a chain is in this group." Please read the advice for vulnerable people or those shielding in the 'Government advice on home moving during the covid-19 outbreak'.

2. Considerations for your move

There are three key stages in the property purchase, sale and rental process. The checklists below outline everything you need to know.

A. Checklist to prepare for a property professional to visit your property for sale or let

When you want to let or sell a property and are arranging visits there is a lot that you can do, together with property professionals, to take sensible precautions and minimise the time people spend in your property.

Property professionals will need to ask a series of questions prior to visiting your property, including:

- ✓ Has anyone in the home had COVID-19?
- ✓ Has anyone at home displayed COVID-19 symptoms or not yet completed a required period of household self-isolation?
- ✓ Do you or anyone in your family have any COVID-19 symptoms?

- ✓ **Is there someone in the property that could be/is in the high-risk category? If so, they should ideally be placed elsewhere. Can a representative be appointed in their place?**

The company should also confirm with you that the property professional viewing or visiting your property hasn't had any symptoms.

Steven Oates will endeavour to carry out all appointments, however if an agent is not present at a viewing, they will ask all those attending to declare they have no symptoms and keep a record that highlights everyone has understood the need to meet the safety guidelines.

To keep contact to a minimum:-

- ✓ **No open house viewings should take place.**
- ✓ **Ideally, only one professional and up to two other adults should attend viewings. Where viewers need to be accompanied by small children they should be kept from touching surfaces.**
- ✓ **Physical viewings should be limited to members of the same household. eg If a couple wish to view but are currently living in separate households, they should book separate viewings.**
- ✓ **Your property professional is likely to ask whether you can leave the property during viewings, so do advise if this is not possible (Can you go for a walk? Leave your home for food shopping? Be outside?)**
- ✓ **Where possible, only one property professional will visit the property at a time. Where that is not possible, for example, if two removal people are required, or if you have tradespeople working on the property, professionals should adhere to current social distancing measures if they can. (Please see moving day checklist).**
- ✓ **Viewings will ideally take place outside of commuting times to avoid rush hour.**

Anyone coming to assess your home for a valuation, surveys, assessment of energy performance, or for any other purpose, may ask questions about your property and put direct questions to you prior to the visit, in the interests of minimising time spent in your property, for example:

- Why are you moving?
- Is the property occupied? If so, are the occupant's tenants or homeowners?
- Are there any potential risks to the occupants?
- What is the current and planned future use of the property?

Please consider answers to the questions ready when you speak to your property professional.

15-minute viewing and visits.

Where possible, and depending on the size of the property, agents and viewers will be asked to minimise time inside the property.

This won't be possible, however, for property assessments such as energy performance, for preparing marketing materials, and surveys or removals.

The service may take longer than before due to the precautions taken. This is likely, so please be patient and understanding.

Keys

When handing over keys to an agent, surveyor or other property professional, ensure they are sanitised by using hand sanitisers or passed via a disinfection wipe.

B. Home viewings, property visits and assessments checklist

When a property is being viewed or assessed by a property professional, they will minimise the time spent in your property. When booking a visit or viewing, a property professional should ask a series of questions prior to visiting your property, including:

- Has anyone in the home had COVID-19?
- Has anyone at home displayed COVID-19 symptoms or not yet completed a required period of household self-isolation?
- Do you or anyone in your family have any COVID-19 symptoms?
- Is there someone in the property that could be/is in the high-risk category? If so, they should ideally not be present in the property. Can a representative be appointed in their place?

We will also confirm with you that the property professional viewing or visiting your property, or any viewers, haven't had any symptoms.

When preparing your property for viewings, valuations and surveys, please protect everyone by:

1. Keeping windows and internal doors open wherever possible.
2. Wiping down door handles/handrails/lift controls or other 'touch points', especially in the kitchen and bathroom.
3. Opening a loft hatch and setting up a loft ladder (for survey).
4. Turning the room lights on, this will stop the need for any else touching the switch.
5. If possible, leave the property during the visit/inspection; for example, stay outside, or if it is not possible to leave the property, remain in one room. Otherwise, only have one adult present. Ideally wash hands before and after someone has visited and keep to social distancing measures at all times.
6. Ensuring pets and children are not in the property, or stay in one room and move to another room when the visitor needs to see the room they are in.
7. Restrict access to w/c or wash facilities unless the property professional(s) is/are there for a long time. If used, please disinfect after use.
8. Sanitising any keys handed to an agent, surveyor or other property professional using hand sanitisers, or passing via a disinfectant wipe.
9. Clean door hands before and after each visit.
10. Some more vulnerable visitors and occupants may ask people present to wear nonsurgical face coverings. Advice is available for vulnerable people or those shielding in the '*Government advice on home moving during the covid-19 outbreak*'

After the visit, don't forget to wipe down any door handles and other 'touch points' with a disinfectant.

If you are viewing a property:

1. Before arranging a physical viewing of a property, consider viewing virtually first to minimise the number of visits you need to make.
2. Note that viewings should ideally take place outside commuting hours and avoid using public transport wherever possible.
3. The agent is likely to turn up 10 minutes before any viewings to ensure the property is prepared for viewings.

4. Viewers are asked to wash hands ideally using a hand sanitiser prior to entering and leaving a property.
5. Only one professional and up to two other adults should attend viewings, where viewers need to be accompanied by small children they should be kept from touching surfaces.
6. Ideally, only one professional and up to two other adults should attend viewings. Where viewers need to be accompanied by small children they should be kept from touching surfaces.
7. Physical viewings should be limited to members of the same household. eg If a couple wish to view but are currently living in separate households, they should book separate viewings.
8. Ideally the agent will show you around the property, but if this is not possible, please adhere to the 2m social distancing rule and wash hands or use a hand sanitiser before and after your visit.
9. Avoid touching surfaces. If you have them use gloves and disinfectant wipes.
10. Some more vulnerable visitors and occupants may ask people present to wear nonsurgical face coverings.
11. Any feedback on the property or discussions should ideally be discussed outside or after the visit.

Please be patient; it may take longer to secure a viewing due to staff restrictions or more property visits having to be accompanied by the agent. All of these measures are in place to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Mortgage valuations, home surveys and energy assessments

Most mortgage valuations and all home survey inspections and energy assessments will require surveyors to inspect your property in person. Surveyors will minimise time spent at the property, however depending on the service and your requirements, they may need to spend a longer time inspecting different parts of the property.

C. Checklist for moving day during COVID-19

You can reduce moving day stress by preparing beforehand.

Some removal services would normally offer packing services but these will be limited for now. However, boxes and packing equipment can still be supplied.

A 'deep clean' is recommended when moving in and out of a property, so it's a good idea to agree with your property lawyer whether you need to do a deep clean on your own home when it is empty, and also whether you need to do this in your new home before you move in.

Vulnerable people or those shielding

If you are in this category, please seek medical advice on whether your move should take place as during this period the government advice is "*staying at home and avoiding unnecessary contacts over this period, if at all possible.*"

The also suggest that "*All parties involved in home buying and selling should prioritise agreeing amicable arrangements to change move dates for individuals in this group, or where someone in a chain is in this group.*"

Please read the advice for vulnerable people or those shielding in the '*Government advice on home moving during the covid-19 outbreak*'.

Before moving day:

1. If you need to send money to your property lawyer check whether your bank account has any limit on the amount you can send via your online banking. If you arrange the payments in advance you can avoid a visit to your bank. Be alert to fraudsters – they look for signs you might be sending money so avoid posting on social media that you are moving and be especially suspicious if you receive communication that suggests your property lawyer has changed their bank details.
2. Self-pack miscellaneous and non-breakable items wherever possible (ask your removal company what boxes and other materials they will supply and to itemise any associated costs).
3. Where possible, please clean your belongings, with standard domestic cleaning products before they are handled by others, including removal firms.
4. Packing by the remover is currently limited to china, glass and breakable items.
5. Dismantle for packing, and then re-assemble at the destination, furniture items in your new home wherever possible.
6. Co-ordinate your move with anyone living in the property so they will have time to move out before you or your removers arrive at the property. Check if there is an agreed time for the property to become vacant on the day of the move, for example 2pm.
7. If it is possible, allow 72 hours between a householder moving out and a new one moving in. This may be more likely to be possible when renting.

Try to have everything packed and ready the night before your move.

On moving day, before the removers arrive:

1. Where possible, if you haven't already, please clean your belongings, with standard domestic cleaning products before they are handled by others, including removal firms
2. Ideally leave the property while the removers are working, either by staying outside, or keeping yourself to one room. Always observe the two metre social distancing measures. If you have access to disposable gloves, sanitising gels and possibly masks, please use them.
3. Clean down hard surfaces with warm soapy water, then disinfect these surfaces with household disinfectant.
4. Wipe down door handles/handrails/lift controls and other 'touch points' with household disinfectant (check first that it won't damage the surfaces).
5. Clean and wash toilet facilities as above.
6. Keep windows open to allow ventilation.
7. Have one designated bathroom, if possible, just for the crew to use. Place soap and handsanitiser within easy reach. Clean and wash the area as noted above.
8. Open a loft hatch or set up a loft ladder.
9. Ensure pets and children are not in the property or keep them in the same room with you.
10. Wash your hands regularly, use paper towels to dry them and/or your own hand sanitiser Remember - any keys handed over need to be sanitised by using hand sanitisers, or via disinfectant wipes. Note that it will not be possible for crew members to keep a 2m distance during your move from each other, but you should keep a 2m social distance from them.