



Seller's guide





1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

If you are reading this guide, you have probably taken the decision to sell your home or investment property. While selling a property is not overly complex, it can be a little daunting. To ensure a successful transaction, there are lots of things that need to be done, and lots of people that need to be involved. To help clients better understand the process, we have prepared this “Sellers Guide” which, we hope, will answer most of the questions you might have.

Selling your home can be exciting, but for many people, it can seem a little overwhelming. Not only are you changing where and how you live, you are embarking on one of the largest financial transactions of your life. It’s no surprise then, that selling a home is often deemed to be one of life’s most stressful events. The good news is that we are here to help, and we have a huge amount of experience. We will guide you through every step of the process and we are always available to answer any questions you have.

Throughout the sales process, you will be required to make important decisions such as; how much to list your property for, whether to accept any offer you receive, which advisors to use, how to deal with any issues on survey or conveyancing etc. It’s important to get these decisions right, as they could either save or cost you a considerable amount of time and money.

By gaining an understanding of the sales process and what needs to be done at each stage, you give yourself the best chance of making good decisions and achieving the best outcome.

Our “Sellers Guide” details the following 8-step process that selling your property will typically involve.

Step 1 – Getting Ready

Step 2 – Setting an asking price

Step 3 – Marketing your property

Step 4 – Preparing for viewings

Step 5 – Receiving and accepting an offer

Step 6 – Post offer sales progression

Step 7 – Exchange of contracts

Step 8 – Completion

Throughout the guide you will see a number of “callout boxes” which you should pay particular attention to. Each of these provide a key fact, a critical action required or a top tip for you to follow.

We are delighted you are considering our services and we look forward to assisting you complete the successful sale of your home.



2. WHY CHOOSE ASPIRE RESIDENTIAL?

At Aspire Residential, our philosophy is simple; to achieve the best financial outcome for our clients while ensuring they experience the minimal amount of stress. To this end, we have built our business on the three core values of *Service*, *Expertise* and *Accountability*. These values are fundamental to everything that we do.

At the end of the day, while we transact “property” for clients, our business is primarily about dealing with “people”. When selling your property, our aim is not just to deliver an outstanding result, but to do it in a way that demonstrates our unwavering commitment to client service. For us it’s not just about “what we do”, it’s also about “how we do it”.

Service

We are passionate about service, so much so that the key metric that we use to manage our team is what our clients say about us - our client feedback score. While you can teach an agent to make a cold call or conduct a viewing, it's hard to teach someone to actually “care” about what they do. At Aspire, we have handpicked a team of people that have customer service and client care as part of their DNA.

QUICK FACT : *Many agencies reward staff based on metrics such as the number of cold calls made. At Aspire, the most important metric that we use is what our clients say about us – our client feedback score.*

Expertise

We are a small team, but with a lot of experience. All recommendations and advice that we provide is based on years of local industry knowledge and supported by a robust analysis of current market conditions. We will give you the facts and show you the data. We firmly believe that an informed decision is a good decision.

Accountability

As a client, you will always have direct access to the owners and directors of the business to ensure you stay appraised of progress throughout every step of the transaction. A senior team member will always personally conduct viewings to actually “sell” your property to potential buyers and, once we secure the sale, the file stays with our senior staff to manage through to completion. You benefit from having real expertise and accountability from our first meeting, to the day we hand over the keys to the new buyer of your property. At Aspire, you won’t be dealing with an “employee” or junior member of staff. As an independent agency, you deal with the directors and business owners. The buck stops with us.

QUICK FACT : *With Aspire, you don’t deal with employees or junior staff, you deal directly with the Owners and Directors of the business. The buck stops with us !!*



3. THE SELLING PROCESS

The following pages outline our 8-step process to selling your home or property. When reading the guide, pay particular attention to any action points, tips and quick facts – they are designed to help you understand what you need to do at each stage and why it's important.

STEP 1 – GETTING READY

Deciding to move home is a huge decision and there is a lot to be done to get yourself and your property ready. Here is our checklist of things you should have considered and organised before you place your property on the market:

- ✓ Are you committed to your decision? Are there other alternatives such as developing or extending your existing home? Should you consider renting your property out rather than selling it?
- ✓ Determine whether you are going to try to coordinate an onward purchase of a new property.
- ✓ Ensure that your finances are in order and that you have considered all of the costs you will incur in the sales process, whether there are any penalties for surrendering your mortgage, the implications of any negative equity? Etc.

TOP TIP : A useful tool for calculating the cost of selling and moving can be found at <https://www.reallymoving.com/moving-cost-calculator>

- ✓ Determine whether there are any improvements, renovations or repairs that should be carried out ahead of marketing the property.
- ✓ Have all of the paperwork in place such as planning permission for building works, building control sign off, warranties for major fittings, latest service records for boilers etc.

TOP TIP : There are websites such as FENSA, Gas safe, Local council planning, NICEIC etc that will allow you to buy replacement certificates for building works.

- ✓ Obtain a current Energy Performance Certificate (we can do this for you).

ACTION REQUIRED : before marketing your property you will need a current Energy Performance Certificate. If you do not have one, we can arrange this for you.

- ✓ Do research on market conditions. Look at sold prices on Rightmove, Zoopla and OnTheMarket. Also, feel free to pop in and have a chat with us to get a better “feel” for market conditions.
- ✓ Appoint your estate agent.
- ✓ Understand any important time commitments that you are working to or periods you will be absent during the sales process.



STEP 2 – ESTABLISHING THE ASKING PRICE

This is a tough one! You want to achieve the best price, but you don't want to fall into the trap of asking too much and letting your property go "stale".

If a property fails to sell in a reasonable period, people will naturally ask "what's wrong with it". Has it received a poor survey? Has it been valued lower than the asking price by a mortgage company? Don't forget that potential buyers will see (on Rightmove, Zoopla, OnTheMarket etc) any price reductions made, and how long the property has been on the market. Invariably, most interest is generated within the first couple of weeks of marketing, and you should set the price to create as much "buzz" as you possibly can in those early weeks.

When determining the price you want to achieve, we recommend you do some research on how the local market is performing, and at what price similar properties are selling. "On line" portals such as Rightmove and Zoopla provide a great source of basic information. However, the best way to get a "feel" for market conditions is to pop in and have a chat. We are always happy to provide free advice and information about the local property market.

TOP TIP : Use websites like Rightmove, OnTheMarket and Zoopla to gain an understanding of recent sales in your area.

One point we would stress is that you should be cautious when using "on line" valuation tools. No matter how good their systems or algorithms, they cannot possibly take into account the specific condition of your property or the nuances of the local market.

TOP TIP : Be careful when using "on line" websites to value your property. They can give wildly inaccurate valuations.

A further thing to remember is that many agents will quote an overly optimistic selling price to win your business. While you might feel good about being quoted an inflated price in the short term, over the longer term, you could waste considerable time and energy without achieving a sale. We will not give you an inflated price just to win your business, we will always give you our considered valuation based on existing market conditions.

QUICK FACT : On average, 35% of homes are "price reduced" before they sell. Make sure that your agent gives you a realistic selling price and not an inflated price just to win your business.



STEP 3 – MARKETING YOUR PROPERTY

Many agents talk about marketing plans and strategies in the context of web exposure, premium listings, high quality photos etc. These are important, even critical components of selling your home. However, a real marketing strategy goes much further than glossy photos and involves understanding what it is that you are trying to achieve, what are the key selling features of your property, who your target market is, what competition you face etc.

Developing a marketing plan is a two-way process as nobody knows your property better than you do. At Aspire, we take the time to understand what it is you love about your property and what you think others might love. We also determine whether there are any specific issues that we will need to manage during the sales process. The key elements of our marketing strategy include;

- ✓ *Determine the positive attributes* - these are the attributes that buyers will find most attractive and appealing. These will need to be specifically promoted in the listing of your property.

Top Tip : Read Aspire Residential's guide to what features attract and detract buyers at <https://www.aspireresidential.co.uk/news/selling/58-what-features-attract-and-detract-buyers> .

- ✓ *Determine any issues to be managed* - Unfortunately, people tend to see beyond just the positive features of your property and look for reasons why they “shouldn’t” buy. This is just human nature. A good marketing strategy gets ahead of any issues and ensures that the agent has the answers to any potential problematic questions.
- ✓ *Determine the target market* - Once we understand the attributes that are going to be attractive about your home, we can be targeted in determining who the likely buyer is going to be. While we want to “cast the net as wide as possible” to capture potential buyers, we also want to be as specific as possible so we can really “sell” the features to buyers who are suitable. On average, it takes 10-15 viewings to sell a home, however with specific targeting of your property, we would hope to achieve a much better “viewing to offer ratio”.

QUICK FACT : On average it takes between 10-15 viewings to sell a property. But with targeted marketing we would hope to achieve a much better success rate.

- ✓ *Asses the competition* – Any strategy needs to take account of other competing properties and what can be done to get an “edge” on the competition.
- ✓ *Devise an advertising plan* – Based on what we learn about your property, we will devise an advertising and marketing plan to ensure that your property gets the relevant exposure to the right buyers.

ACTION REQUIRED : before marketing your property you will need to approve the details that we will use for advertising - to ensure they appropriately reflect the properties condition.



- ✓ *Consider marketing “out of area”* – where we think that your property might be attractive to “out of area buyers”, we will create an appropriate plan to engage such buyers.
- ✓ *Tap into current trends* – Depending on who your buyer is likely to be, we will devise an on-line marketing plan using social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn etc.

QUICK FACT : *93% of property searches begin on line. While Rightmove, Zoopla, On TheMarket currently dominate, social media platforms are becoming more prevalent for property advertising – especially when targeting millennials.*

Based on the above, we will create an appropriate marketing and advertising campaign including a mix of physical print, pre marketing, on line marketing, open house events, out of area advertising etc.



STEP 4 – PREPARING FOR AND DEALING WITH VIEWINGS

When preparing for viewings, there are some simple steps you can take to positively impact how your home is presented. You don't have to spend a lot of money in "staging", but there are some straightforward and cheap things that you can do to improve your home's selling potential.

The most critical point to remember is that "first impressions last". House buying is as much an emotional decision as it is a logical one. People tend to make up their minds in the first 10 minutes about whether they like a property and whether they want to make an offer. You want to ensure that any potential buyer can quickly identify the positive attributes of your home.

QUICK FACT : *It takes buyers just 8 minutes on average to decide whether they like a property. First impressions really do count.*

The simple steps that you can take to prepare your home are as follows;

- ✓ *Declutter* – This is the cheapest and most important thing you should do, as decluttering makes rooms look larger and it removes distractions from the eye of the buyer.
- ✓ *Deep clean* – Take the time to give the house a good clean including carpets, windows, descaling sinks and baths etc.
- ✓ *Undertake basic repairs* – Deal with any small repairs which might distract buyers eg broken cupboards, touch up paint work, ensure all lights are working, clean or re-grout tiles etc.
- ✓ *It's not just the look* – First impressions don't just come from what people see, make sure any lingering odours are eradicated and regulate the heating to ensure it's not too hot or cold.
- ✓ *Be neutral* - Neutral colours make it easier for buyers to visualise their furniture and effects in the property. If you are going to spend any money in preparing your property, then a "lick of paint" is a good place to start.
- ✓ *Let there be light* - People tend to like light and airy rooms. Ensure that all curtains and blinds let in the maximum amount of light.
- ✓ *Don't forget the outside* – When it comes to first impressions, kerb appeal is important. Keep gardens well-tended to, mend fences or broken walls, do external paint touch ups and hide bins out of sight from the road or the approach to the property.

QUICK FACT : *6 out of 10 buyers will rule out a property before even walking through the door. Kerb appeal matters!*

TOP TIP : *For more information on preparing your property for viewings, read Aspire Residential blog at <https://www.aspireresidential.co.uk/news/selling/6-first-impressionsilast>*



STEP 5 – RECEIVING AN OFFER

Obviously, the monetary value of any offer is critical. However, there are other aspects that should be taken into account before a decision is taken whether to accept. As your agent, we are legally obliged to present you with all offers we receive, however we will also provide you with our independent and objective assessment of the relative “strength of that offer”.

ACTION REQUIRED : *If you haven't already done so, on acceptance of offer you should instruct a solicitor or conveyancing firm to complete the legal aspects of the sale.*

It should also be remembered that any initial offer is usually just the start of a “negotiation process”. Buyers might be “testing the water”, and sometimes first offers can be between 5-10% below the asking price. As your agent, we will try to assess whether the buyer has the ability to increase their offer and will advise you accordingly.

In assessing the relative strength of any offer, we will take into consideration the following matters;

- ✓ The monetary value of the offer.
- ✓ How long has your house has been on the market.
- ✓ How much other interest we are receiving in your home and the probability of an alternative offer.
- ✓ The buyer's financial position.
- ✓ The relative complexity of any chain.
- ✓ Any time constraints or commitments the buyer has.

You should not rush the decision and should take a day or so to fully consider the offer before responding. The last thing you want is to accept an offer from a poorly qualified buyer, spend considerable time and money, and then have the transaction fall apart after a couple of months. This is where your Agent's experience and advice becomes invaluable. It's frequently said that “any offer is a good offer”. At Aspire, we do not concur with this, as we believe that only a “well qualified offer is a good offer”.

Once you accept an offer, your property will be “sold subject to contract” and will be identified as such on the various property websites.

TOP TIP : *Remember that at this point, the sale of your home is “subject to contract” and until contracts are exchanged there is no obligation on you or your buyer to proceed with the sale .*



STEP 6 – SALES PROGRESSION

It's great to experience the euphoria of receiving and accepting an offer. However, unfortunately there is still some considerable work to do before you "pop the cork" to celebrate. You will need to be a little patient in the period between offer and completion, as the overall process seems to take an "eternity" as searches are performed, mortgages are approved, enquires are answered etc.

QUICK FACT : *The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors has estimated that the average time between offer and completion is 16 weeks.*

Many Estate Agents believe that their job is done when they get an offer accepted. The file is handed to a junior member of staff to "keep an eye on things" while the senior team move onto the "next sale". We do not concur with this approach, as the data clearly shows that after offer, a transaction still has a 40% chance of not completing successfully. Cognisant of this fact, at Aspire, we do things differently. We recognise that obtaining an offer is only part of our job, and that is why the file stays with our senior staff to manage right through to successful completion of the transaction.

QUICK FACT : *On average, 40% of transactions fall through after an offer is accepted but before the transaction closes*

QUICK FACT : *At Aspire – your file stays with the same senior member of our team from the day you instruct us to the day we hand the keys to your buyer on completion.*

We call this period between offer and completion the "sales progression process". There are a number of parties involved including solicitors, surveyors, mortgage companies, the buyer and seller and of course, the agent. While much of the work performed during this period happens "behind the scenes", it still requires a considerable degree of coordination to keep things moving along.

This is what you can expect to happen during the sales progression process.

6.1 ***Instruct your solicitor or conveyancing firm***

Now that you have agreed a sale subject to contract, it's time for you to instruct your solicitor or conveyancing firm to conduct the legal aspects of the sale on your behalf.

TOP TIP : *Make sure that you appoint a solicitor or conveyancing firm that has relevant experience. Some firms work on a "no transaction, no fee" basis, which is a great safeguard in the event the sale falls through. We are happy to recommend conveyancing firms who we know have a successful track record.*

TOP TIP : *If you're selling and buying at the same time, try to use the same solicitor for both transactions, it will probably work out cheaper and certainly be more efficient.*



6.2 Memorandum of sale

Once a sale has been agreed, we will confirm each party's solicitor information and check any outstanding identification documentation in order to issue the 'Memorandum of Sale' (MOS). The MOS is confirmation from the agent of the agreed terms and conditions of the sale.

6.3 Completion of property information forms

As the seller, you will need to complete a number of "property information forms" which provide the buyer with further information on the property, the fixtures and fittings to be included in the sale and, where relevant, details regarding leasehold property. You should aim to get these forms completed as quickly as possible and remember that all information provided in the property information forms should be correct. If it is determined that you have misled the buyer with the information you provide, you may be liable to legal action.

The solicitors cannot progress the transaction until these forms have been completed so it is important that you deal with them as quickly as possible.

ACTION REQUIRED : Remember to complete the property information forms as early as possible so that the sales process is able to quickly progress.

TOP TIP : In answering the property information forms, you should always provide correct information and never mislead the buyer.

6.4 Management pack (leasehold only)

If the property being sold is leasehold, then a "management pack" will typically be required (otherwise known as an LPE1 form). The management pack provides information with regards to the block of flats in which the leasehold is held, what the maintenance charges are, whether there is a reserve fund etc. It is the seller's responsibility to pay for this pack.

ACTION REQUIRED : If you are selling a leasehold, remember to have your solicitor order the management pack as soon as possible. You will need to pay for the pack.

6.5 Issuing a draft contract

Your solicitor will request the deeds to the property from your mortgage lender and office copies from land Registry. A contract will be drafted by your solicitor and sent to the buyer's solicitor for review. The contract will set out the key terms of the sale including the selling price, the time between exchange of contract and completion and any other critical matters.



6.6 Enquiries raised

The buyer's solicitor might raise a number of enquiries/questions about the property based on the draft contract, search results, survey or any other matter. Ideally, all enquiries will be raised at one time, however practically, they tend to be raised sporadically as more information is received by the buyer's solicitor. Your solicitor should be able to answer the majority of the enquiries, however on occasion, they might need to refer the matter back to you for your input or decision.

ACTION REQUIRED : *Where your solicitor reverts any enquiry to you, try to deal with the matter as quickly as possible so the transaction is able to progress.*

6.7 Additional actions your buyers will need to take

While you have a lot of work to do to complete the sale, your buyer and their solicitors have an even bigger job. Your buyer will likely undertake the following tasks;

- ✓ Their mortgage lender will require a valuation/inspection of the property to ensure that it represents sufficient security for the amount your buyer wishes to borrow. This inspection will also identify if there are any major issues with the property such as damp, movement etc.
- ✓ The lender will release the mortgage offer once it has completed all of its underwriting and due diligence. This typically happens between one and two weeks after the valuation.
- ✓ In addition to the mortgage lenders valuation/inspection, your buyer might commission an independent survey, which is a more comprehensive examination of the condition of the property.
- ✓ Your buyer's solicitor will undertake "searches". There are predominantly three searches that will be undertaken;
 - Local Authority Search – where information is supplied by the local council on any development or enforcement issues that might affect the particular property and any properties/land in the surrounding area.
 - Water and Drainage – which will establish a number of things, but specifically if the property is connected to mains water and drainage supply, and where the pipes run across the land.
 - Environmental – Used to identify risks in the immediate area such as flooding or landslides.

TOP TIP : *It is not uncommon for a buyer to try to renegotiate the purchase price based on the findings of a survey report. If this happens, we will meet with you and agree an appropriate plan and response to the relevant findings from the report. We have access to a number of surveyors and builders who can assist us in responding to any adverse matters identified in a survey.*



STEP 7 – EXCHANGE OF CONTRACT

Prior to exchange of contract, there is no obligation on either party to proceed, and either party may withdraw without penalty (other than paying the costs that they have incurred for solicitors, surveyors etc). However, an exchange of contract between solicitors creates a legally binding commitment on both buyer and seller to complete the transaction. If either party withdraws from the transaction after exchange, there will almost certainly be legal and financial consequences.

QUICK FACT : *On exchange of contract there is a legally binding agreement between you and your buyer. Both parties are now legally obliged to complete the transaction.*

Once all enquiries and outstanding matters have been dealt with and a formal mortgage offer received by the buyer's solicitor, exchange of contracts can take place. Both the buyer and the seller will sign identical contracts and the "exchange" is undertaken between solicitors. On exchange, the buyer typically makes a "deposit" payment of 10% of the contract amount to the seller's solicitor. The balance of the purchase price is paid on the completion date.

ACTION REQUIRED : *Your solicitor or conveyancing firm will need the signed contract before they can exchange, so be sure to send it back to your solicitor in plenty of time to meet the planned exchange date.*

ACTION REQUIRED : *Even though your solicitor has your signed contract, you must still give them express authority to exchange contracts on your behalf and confirm the completion date you require.*

It is normal practice to allow between 1 and 4 weeks (with 2 weeks usual) between exchange and completion to allow all of the parties to finalise their preparations.

TOP TIP : *Ensure that you allow sufficient time between exchange and completion to get everything packed up and ready to move. Don't underestimate the work involved!*



STEP 8 - COMPLETION

Completion is the day that you will receive the funds from the sale of your property and the buyer will be handed the keys. Your solicitor or agent will notify you when completion takes place. Depending on the mortgage company, this normally takes place in the morning of the completion date, however where there is a long chain or there are banking delays, it can happen slightly later in the day.

Where you have an outstanding mortgage on the property, the lender will calculate the redemption value as at the date of completion and the solicitor will remit this amount from the proceeds received. Your solicitor will also normally deduct their fees and your estate agents' fees, and pay any balance to you. Following completion, your solicitor will register the change of ownership with Land Registry.

Congratulations, your property is now sold.

TOP TIP : *We hope the above information was helpful. However, we recognise there is a lot of "jargon" and "property speak" involved in selling. If there is anything that you do not understand, then please give us a call, or refer to our blog on jargon busting at <https://www.aspireresidential.co.uk/news/selling/44-buying-and-selling-jargon-buster>*