

# What should residential managing agents look for in Chartered Building Surveyors?

Residential managing agents have the luxury of choosing from a wide range of building surveyors. But which should they work with?

Clearly, there are a number of boxes to tick. One would expect every firm to be 'professional' and to have the skills and experience required to provide a reliable and efficient service in every core area.

However, as every year goes by, the very definition of 'building surveying', specifically within the context of the residential sector, evolves. The vanilla services traditionally associated with the profession have been enhanced by many others ranging from architecture and interior design to facilities management.

**Ultimately, we believe that being a great surveyor is like being a great pilot. You take responsibility.**

**You learn to avoid problems before they occur. And when a serious issue does arise, you have the trust of your clients to deal with it effectively.**

For example, building surveyors can assess the future maintenance requirements of buildings, prepare planned maintenance programmes and then take responsibility for specifying and overseeing repairs and refurbishments. They can also study early-stage designs to identify likely issues when assessing leaseholder alterations and advising on Licence to Alter matters.

Surveyors can carry out fire risk assessments, they can assess buildings' rebuild costs for insurance purposes and also provide assistance in handling of insurance claims and managing reinstatement works. They can help their clients to view building projects from the contractor's perspective, which can be invaluable when reviewing tenders. Every chartered building surveyor must have excellent contract administration and project management skills, however an in-depth understanding of Landlord and Tenant law in addition – particularly in respect of the 'section 20' consultation process

– will ensure the client and managing agent are very well served.

This is a huge spectrum, covering diverse technical expertise in addition to project (and relationship) management. And so when the question is who to choose, there is the option of bringing-in different specialists for different aspects of a project, or a firm that can cover the full spectrum.

At Earl Kendrick, we have built a business to provide this wide-ranging, holistic, 'portfolio' approach to surveying. That's because, in our view, the biggest risk to any project are the grey areas between specific jobs. In fact, for all the technical expertise required, we feel that an ability to manage a project top-down, from start to finish, is the most important of all.

That priority is reflected in the personnel of our team. Because we don't just recruit product specialists; we recruit people who have the ability to manage projects and works of all shapes, sizes and complexities.

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Diversification is key. You might imagine that a team of building surveyors would consist of a group of similarly qualified people with similar skills, but a diverse team with different experiences and specialisations is far better able to help clients with the full range of services that they inevitably require from us. It enables us to work with different types of clients and any range of projects.

Specifically, this means we have surveyors who specialise in Defect Diagnosis, Licences to Alter, in Planned Maintenance Programmes, Management of Major Works Projects, Reinstatement Cost Assessments and Party Wall matters.

All this helps us to establish a rapport with each client and their managing agent, which means we not only have someone to deal with just about any requirement, but we can also

cultivate the sort of long-term relationships clients and managing agents crave, allowing us to anticipate future needs.

As importantly, we understand that building projects are as much about the people within each building as the bricks and mortar themselves. Residents meetings, for example, don't always take place within office hours, so we need to make the time to be there. Monthly meetings with managing agents are not officially part of the role, but they ensure that projects stay on track, information is shared, and potential issues are resolved before they develop.

Any residential managing agent will understand the benefit of allowing their clients to deal direct with the surveyor at times, particularly when there is a question of crucial detail being lost in translation. Again, we see that as a 'must have' feature of our service, rather than a chore.

Additionally, we pair surveyors to work in teams, to ensure continuity. There is nothing more unprofessional or irritating than a new surveyor turning up on site explaining that the original surveyor has disappeared on paternity leave!

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I'm sure it is pretty clear that our answer to the original question is a little biased! We have built a business around our own answer. But the good news is that we have tried and tested it for many years, and our holistic approach to the services we provide has met with the approval of every managing agent we have met along the way!

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