

## Is your property suffering from a building defect?

If the answer is yes, then you are not on your own. According to the Government's own statistics\*, over 1.7 million homes in England and Wales have a 'serious' repair problem. Not only can these be expensive to resolve but unless they are repaired quickly, the defect can lead to more serious problems in the future.

### **An independent diagnostic service**

Based on many years of experience, BlueBox *partners* have developed a comprehensive diagnostic service for property owners. Coordinated by Phil Parnham, a Chartered Building Surveyor, we use the latest research and techniques to accurately identify the cause of all types of building defects found in residential buildings. We work for individual owners as well as private and social landlords.

BlueBox *partners* do not have any commercial links with other organisations; we are fully independent and offer three different types of service:

**Level one service** - This is based a visual survey that is 'non-invasive'. We do not lift carpets and floorboards, we do not look into concealed spaces, or use specialised testing techniques. In most cases we can identify the cause of the problem. However, because many parts of a property are concealed, further investigations may occasionally be required.

**Level two service** - This is a more detailed investigation that uses 'invasive' techniques. For example, we may have to lift carpets and floorboards, take off skirting boards and in some cases, knock holes in your walls. Some of this work we can do ourselves but occasionally we will use a builder. In the most difficult cases, specialised testing techniques will be the only way to diagnose the cause of the problem. Although this is more expensive than a level one report, and may disturb part of the dwelling, it will usually identify the precise cause of the defect so cost effective repair work can be organised.

**Level three** - This level of service is usually associated with legal disputes. Common examples include where a property owner alleges a surveyor failed to identify the proper condition of a building in an inspection report, or a contractor's repair work did not cure the original problem. Known as an 'expert witness report', it usually forms part of a legal process. It will be very thorough and often use specialised testing techniques.

The type of service that will suit your property will depend on the individual circumstances. Please contact BlueBox *partners* to discuss your particular project.

\* The English House Condition Survey 2006



This crack in the side of an older building is being monitored to see if it gets bigger.



This wall collapsed because it was not properly connected to the rest of the house.



This weak roof structure was badly 'boded' by a builder who did not have a clue!



A surveyor failed to spot this loft floor was not strong enough. The repairs were very expensive.



Sometimes taking samples of the wall is the only way to identify the damp.

**BlueBox *partners***  
**220 Sharrow Lane**  
**Sheffield**  
**S11 8AS**

[info@blueboxpartners.com](mailto:info@blueboxpartners.com)  
[www.blueboxpartners.com](http://www.blueboxpartners.com)  
Tel: 0845 260 3500



A ventilated damp proof barrier solved a persistent dampness problem for one of our clients



To stop the bedroom walls cracking, this floor had to be strengthened.



A plumbing leak resulted in wet rot to the end of these floor joists



Unfortunately, some problems are only too obvious!

*The BlueBox partners Diagnosis of building defects service is coordinated by Phil Parnham, a Chartered Building Surveyor and our Professional Development Director. Phil has many years experience of this type of work and is well known across the residential sector. In addition to his professional work, Phil is one of the country's leading trainers and delivers seminars and conferences for residential practitioners across the UK. He is also a successful technical author and his latest books 'The Domestic Energy Assessor's Handbook' and 'A Surveyor's Guide to the RICS HomeBuyer Service' are two of the most popular books for residential practitioners.*



## Getting the work done

Identifying the cause of a building defect is just the first step; finding a contractor to carry out the work to a satisfactory standard is the next. Most of us have our own horror stories of building work that has gone wrong. Increasing costs, jobs that take months rather than weeks, and homes turned into messy building sites are just a few of our collective experiences.

To be fair to contractors, it is not always their fault. Few property owners prepare properly for building work. For example, little time is spent researching and choosing suitable contractors and although the work may be based on a brief estimate, the scope of the project is usually poorly defined. Formal contracts are rarely used and because unforeseen work regularly crops up, it is not surprising it can all go wrong.

BlueBox *partners* offer a variety of services that can help to reduce the stress of getting the repairs done. This can range from organising the whole project on your behalf through to providing you with specific, limited support. For example, we can provide any (or all) of the following:

- A detailed specification of the work and materials so you can organise your own building work;
- Obtaining fixed quotations from a range of appropriate contractors so you can supervise the work yourself;
- Advise you on what sort of building contract to use, and;
- Inspect the work to make sure it is done in accordance with the original contract.

Please contact our office for details of our fees.

## Geographical coverage

BlueBox *partners* operate across England and Wales from our offices in Bristol, Kings Lynn, Sheffield, and Stafford. Helping you get the work done is currently limited to the South Yorkshire region only. We have links with Chartered Surveyors in all regions so if we cannot do the work ourselves, we will be able to refer you to other organisations we know and trust.

**For more information or a discussion about the service we offer, please contact the BlueBox office by email on [info@blueboxpartners.com](mailto:info@blueboxpartners.com) or by phone on 0845 260 3500.**

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