

## **Home Condition Survey – Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the Home Condition Survey?**

The Home Condition Survey (HCS) is a survey and report designed specifically for the home buyer rather than for inclusion in a Home Information Pack. It has standard terms of engagement and a standard format. Unlike the HCR it will not be lodged on the central register and is not subject to any regulation by CLG. In other words it is an entirely 'commercial' product.

### **How does a HCS differ from a HCR?**

The terms of engagement are slightly different to reflect the fact that the product is for buyers only. In addition there are some minor changes to the structure of the report itself and to the mandatory text, but if you know the HCR then you will find it very familiar, except that it does not include the EPC. The other major difference is how it looks. The PDF is SAVA branded with space for your own logo and, significantly, space for photographs.

### **Who can offer the HCS?**

All Home Inspectors registered with the SAVA Home Inspector Certification Scheme who have signed the HCS Agreement.

### **Why can't I just give the buyer a HCR?**

The HCR is designed to be included in a HIP and this is reflected in the terms of engagement for the HCR. While the buyer can rely on an HCR in the HIP, it was never intended that the product would be commissioned by the buyer.

### **Why isn't there an EPC?**

We have assumed that every property being bought will have been marketed and therefore will have an EPC as part of the HIP. Very rarely a buyer might be considering the purchase of a property which has not been marketed in the normal way, then you could offer an EPC as an additional service.

### **What about a valuation?**

Currently the HCS does not include a valuation. However, if you are a Chartered Surveyor, with the appropriate PI cover, there is nothing to stop you offering a valuation as an additional service. We are investigating the possibility of having a version of the HCS incorporating a valuation.

We are not aware of any lenders having a view on the HCS, and would not expect them to, as it is a report on property condition. CML (Council of Mortgage Lenders) had originally accepted that non RICS members might be able to carry out residential valuations, but in practice individual lenders did not embrace the idea, and with the current market, this is not going to be a top priority for them. It should be noted that lenders tend not to use even those RICS members who are not associated with the larger employers/panels, so being non RICS is not the only barrier to providing valuations for secured lending on residential properties. For the time being, we are not pursuing the

training and assessment for the new Residential Valuation qualification, but this is constantly under review.

### **Is there going to be a market for the HCS?**

We hope so. We cannot make any wild claims, a lot of the success will be down to you, but we are pleased with the pilot and have had positive feedback from all those who took part. One issue that has emerged is that word of mouth is a good way to sell your services.

### **What can I charge for a HCS?**

This is down to you and the local market place. There is no fixed fee. As a guide you can find out what surveyors are charging for the Homebuyer Survey and Valuation Report in your area.

### **How will I access the HCS?**

The HCS will be available via NES one. For all those who are entitled to offer the HCS, the report will be available via the NES one account.

### **Why is there a separate Home Condition Survey Scheme?**

Because the SAVA Home Inspector Certification Scheme was formed in accordance with Government Legislation, we cannot use it for the HCS. There is therefore a separate Home Condition Survey Scheme, much like the SAVA Home Inspector Certification Scheme, which however does not relate to HIP Legislation. All Members of the SAVA Home Inspector Certification Scheme can join the Home Condition Survey Scheme free of charge. All that is needed is a signature on the Home Condition Survey Scheme Membership contract.

### **How much is the Scheme report registration fee?**

The registration fee is £15.00 (plus VAT), this is paid in the usual way through NES one.

### **If I have taken Scheme insurance am I covered for the HCS?**

Yes – if you use the insurance cover provided by the Scheme then it will include cover for the HCS.

The Scheme insurance is free to use and covers all HCR and HCS produced. If you would like to use our insurance please sign and return the SAVA PII Consent Form which is attached to the invitation email.

### **If I have my own insurance, am I covered for the HCS under my policy?**

We do not envisage any problem **but you cannot assume this automatically**. You must check with your broker and if necessary send them a sample of the report, including the terms of engagement.

**I want to offer the HCS & am an existing member, what do I do now?**

You need to sign and return the HCS Membership Agreement which was attached to the invitation email. Once we have your agreement we will provide you with access to the report on NES one and send you the Release Notes for the HCS.

**I am not a member of the SAVA Certification Scheme – how can I produce the HCS?**

You must join the SAVA Home Inspector Certification Scheme before you can offer the HCS.

**What training do I need to complete the HCS and where do I get it?**

There is no training – if you can do an HCR then you can do an HCS.

**Have the contents of the HCS been finalised?**

The pilot has been successful – users and consumers seem to like it. We have some changes we still want to make, so it will be provisional for some time. We will go live with what we have to give everyone the opportunity to use the product in this ‘changing’ market and make changes and improvements over time, so please let us have your feedback.

**What marketing will SAVA do?**

This is difficult. We know that you want us to shout loud and clearly about the HCS, but in reality it will not be easy to promote it to the home buying public. We are engaging with professional advisors to help us launch the HCS in a cost effective way, and intend to develop a simple marketing strategy.

What we can tell you is that at the simplest level we will create a web page about the product and include a ‘find a surveyor’ functionality. We are also looking to provide support material beyond the existing flyer template, but the detail of this is still being worked upon.