

New Build Consumer Advice Guide – **What to be aware of?**

Buying a home can be stressful and for those purchasing a newly built property there can be added hurdles such as completion delays and ensuring the home has been built to the right standards.

To help you navigate what can be an overwhelming maze of administration and regulation, here's our top tips and advice for ensuring your housebuilder gives you the best service and a quality new home.



CIOB

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CIOB's Top Tips

Check if the housebuilder is registered with the [New Homes Quality Board \(NHQB\)](#). Around 80% of developers in England are registered, or are currently going through registration, and if they are they are committed to a well-defined set of standards called the [New Homes Quality Code \(NHQC\)](#).

If the housebuilder isn't registered with the NHQB ask them about any other codes or standards, they may be signed up to.

Employ a reputable snagging company to visit your property before you move in or within the first few weeks of moving in, to check for defects. Not all defects can be seen by the untrained eye so getting in a professional to thoroughly check the property over is highly recommended.

If your snagging company finds any defects, report them to the housebuilder immediately and refer back to the NHQC or their own set of standards.

Your housebuilder must be given the opportunity to rectify any issues with the property before you take your complaint further.

If the housebuilder doesn't resolve the problems to a satisfactory standard or if no agreement can be made on fixing the problem, you can take your complaint to the [New Homes Ombudsman \(NHO\)](#).

The NHO will also deal with problems in the purchasing or post-sale experience processes.

Frequently Asked Questions

Snagging

To assist in understanding the importance of snagging, we interviewed New Home Quality Control (whose director is John Cooper), a property inspection company based in Swansea but covering England, Scotland and Wales. The results of the interview are referred to throughout this section of the FAQs.

Snags can refer to a wide number of potential issues in a new home, from cosmetic concerns such as a poor paint job or a cracked tile to more significant issues such as bowed walls or cracked foundations.

1. How can I identify snags in my new-build?

The most common and most comprehensive method of identifying snags in a new-build home is to commission a snagging survey. These are entirely optional and can be commissioned by consumers to provide an extra assurance that what they are purchasing matches up with expectations. Once commissioned, the snagging company or building inspector will conduct a thorough survey of the new home and produce a list of issues for the consumer to then take to their housebuilder.

The cost of commissioning a snagging survey is low in comparison with the potential costs that could be incurred if issues are left to be resolved after the warranty period. New Home Quality Control sets the prices of its snagging surveys according to the number of bedrooms in a property. For example, a survey on a three-bed property would cost £399, a four-bed £499 and a five-bed £599.

Most consumers could be overwhelmed by the purchasing process and may not have the knowledge of construction necessary to correctly identify issues that are not merely aesthetic. It is also the case that while some snags may be obvious, there are others of which the average consumer would not be aware and which could intensify over time. Employing a competent construction professional to examine a property and identify such issues could be vital to ensure that consumers get what they have paid for.

2. How long does it take to complete a snagging survey?

According to New Home Quality Control, it takes their surveyors between three and four hours on average. However, this is dependent on the site, size and type of home.

3. When should I get a snagging survey?

While a two-year warranty period is a long time to remediate any defects, if a professional organisation is employed to identify issues early in the purchase process then these can be fixed well in advance of the warranty running out. Alongside this, if a snagging company is commissioned during the exchange then snags can be identified before moving in. So it is advisable to commission a survey as soon as possible.

This point was highlighted by New Home Quality Control, which outlined that there are predominantly two types of snagging surveys, a pre-completion survey and a post-completion survey. As the name suggests, a pre-completion survey is done prior to the new home being finished; however, it was suggested that these

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surveys, while useful, are limited in their scope. Typically, surveyors undertaking pre-completion surveys are only allowed to access an incomplete property for a specified period of time and may not be able to undertake some of the more intrusive work such as removing bath panels or key fixtures. It must be noted that pre-completion surveys are undertaken in line with a checklist of issues to look at provided by the NHQB. This checklist will undoubtedly evolve over time, meaning that pre-completion surveys will become more extensive.

With post-completion surveys, it was noted that if a consumer waits to

commission a survey then there is a danger of their housebuilder arguing that certain aesthetic snags such as dents or damages to walls could have been caused by the consumer when moving in, so New Home Quality Control recommends that a surveyor is commissioned to look at a property the day after keys are exchanged.

4. What are the most common issues identified by snagging surveys?

Here are some of the most common snagging issues along with some less common ones that can be harder for homeowners to spot themselves.

Most common snags

(which can probably be identified by the average consumer):

- Doors not fitted correctly (rattling in their hinges while shut, having gaps that are uneven or not closing or opening properly)
- Squeaking staircases
- Fixings (radiators or shelves) that are not level
- Sockets that are not secured to the walls
- Leaking pipes (particularly in the kitchen or bathroom)
- Issues with decoration (paint or plastering)
- Sealant issues with windows
- Poor or inconsistent carpentry
- Blocked guttering
- Inconsistent brickwork
- Walls not being true (level)
- Cracks in the walls or ceilings

Less well-known snags

(which the average consumer may not be able to identify):

- Tile vents in the roof being incorrectly installed
- Perps to brickwork not being consistent across the whole exterior
- Trickle vents in windows not opening or closing properly
- Low-level windows not being fitted with British Standards Institute (BSI) Kitemark safety glass
- Spindles in handrails being unevenly spaced apart
- Painted areas not being properly prepped
- Incorrect fire doors
- Warped doors, meaning draft excluders do not work properly
- Lagging or insulation on water pipes being incorrectly fitted

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5. How often do consumers use snagging companies?

During the interview we conducted with New Home Quality Control, it was highlighted that snagging companies like this are busier now than ever. Whether this indicates that the quality of housebuilding may not be to the standard we expect or whether snagging has just become a normalised part of the purchasing process is hard to identify. However, it was indicated that consumers cannot rely on the positive reputation of a housebuilder from previous schemes. Quality can be dictated by many factors, including the expertise and level of engagement of the site manager appointed to oversee the work and sign off the final product, and this varies from scheme to scheme. Therefore it is positive to hear that most consumers, regardless of location and housebuilder, are commissioning snagging surveys or budgeting for it as part of their purchase.

6. Is the snagging sector professional?

There are many reputable snagging companies in the market with a good Trustpilot score and ample positive reviews. However, the construction sector has always faced challenges with inconsistency and inadequate training or accreditation for professionals. The same issues apply across all aspects of the industry, including in construction or building control organisations. Many snagging companies are learning on the job. New Home Quality Control noted in the interview that it regularly shares survey results, including specific issues and their resolutions, with all its surveying staff. This ensures consistency in how issues are reported across all the geographic regions it covers as well as in the recommendations being made to housebuilders on how to fix those issues.

As an industry we need to ensure not only that we have a competent construction workforce but also that those carrying out the checks within construction are competent. The risk is that they incorrectly identify snags or miss them altogether, risking wasted expenditure by either the housebuilder or consumer.

It is unclear what percentage of those undertaking snagging surveys are covered by or registered with a professional body. At present it appears that they would be best suited to membership of the [Residential Property Surveyors Association](#) (RPSA). Registration under a professional or trade body typically acts as a mark of quality and competence, because members must undertake regular CPD to maintain their standards and ensure they keep up to date with developing techniques in the housebuilding sector. Membership of a unified professional body is also a useful way to gain access to networks of other professionals who may be able to provide examples of more efficient ways of working or innovations in methodology.

7. How can snagging help improve quality?

One of the key takeaways from the interview with New Home Quality Control was that persistent issues with quality in new-build housing could be solved by housebuilders employing independent snagging companies to come into projects throughout the construction process in order to identify, as they occur, issues that would otherwise later be defined as snags. Not only would this help improve overall quality, as the checks would be in place for the entirety of the construction period, but it would also save potentially disruptive fixes from being carried out after the purchasers move into their new homes.

Frequently Asked Questions

New Homes Quality Board (NHQB)

1. What is the NHQB?

The NHQB is an independent body formed by the government to introduce and oversee a framework that governs the quality of new homes in the UK as well as the customer service provided by housebuilders. The overarching purpose of the framework is to “ensure consistently high standards of new home quality and service, improve developer behaviour, and provide compensation for buyers if these standards are not met”.

2. What has the NHQB done to increase quality?

To underpin the work of the NHQB, a New Homes Quality Code (NHQC) has been published which provides housebuilders with a series of requirements to abide by. These cover every aspect of a new home purchase, from initial sale through to two years after the home has been occupied.

The NHQC is currently in its fourth version and can be accessed in both English and Welsh in large or normal print [here](#).

The NHQC is reliant on housebuilders registering with the system and agreeing to follow the principles of both the NHQB and the NHO. Once registered, housebuilders will be required to accept the decisions of the NHO in any future contact with customers. If a registered housebuilder fails to meet the standards set out by the NHQC, it will be referred to a discipline and sanctions committee, which will decide what actions can be taken against the housebuilder. These range from one-off fines to mandatory retraining for employees or removal from the list of registered housebuilders. A housebuilder being registered with the NHQB will be a mark of quality and a guarantee of protection for purchasers.

It must be noted that registering with the NHQB is not a substitute for meeting other, pre-existing standards and regulations, such as the Building Regulations 2010, the Building Safety Act 2022 or the upcoming Future Homes Standard.

You can learn more about the NHQC by reading our full report [here](#).

3. How can I find out if my housebuilder is covered by the NHQC?

A current list of all registered housebuilders under the NHQC can be found on its website [here](#).

4. What else if the NHQB responsible for?

The NHQB website provides an overview of its primary responsibilities outside of the NHQC. These include:

- **Overseeing the independent NHO Service**
- **Providing support and information to consumers and the industry**
- **Holding the register of developers of new-build homes**
- **Collecting an annual registration fee from housebuilders to fund the new arrangements**
- **Disciplining and sanctioning poorly performing housebuilders**
- **Reporting and publishing details on industry performance**

These responsibilities are backed up by the NHQB’s core aim, which is to deliver a step change in how the housebuilding industry fundamentally works and to provide customers with a means to hold housebuilders to account for failures in quality and customer service.

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New Homes Ombudsman

1. What is the NHO and what powers does it have?

The NHO is the independent service set up as part of the NHQB to establish whether a registered housebuilder has met the requirements of the NHQC in relation to a complaint raised by a customer.

While the NHO is ultimately a punitive mechanism, a key aspect of its role is to act as a mediator between housebuilder and customer to agree a solution without needing a formal decision. If this is not possible, the NHO will examine available evidence and provide a judgment as well as what remedies it proposes, if any.

Remedies could include:

- **An apology and explanation**
- **Putting the matter right**
- **Payment of compensation for loss up to £75,000**
- **Taking any other action in the interests of the complainant as the NHO may specify**

While the decision of the NHO is binding for registered housebuilders, it does not have to be accepted by customers, who can seek alternative action through alternative legal mechanisms such as taking action through a county or small claims court. However, we would advise customers to make use of the free framework that the NHQB has established, if possible.

Useful Links

CIOB full report on new-build housing quality – [here](#).

New Homes Quality Board – [here](#).

New Homes Ombudsman – [here](#).

CIOB resources for homeowners looking to make renovations to existing homes – [here](#).

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