

How your complaint will be dealt with

If you make a complaint to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) about a chartered or technical surveyor who is a member of RICS, we have procedures in place to handle it.

In this leaflet we explain what those procedures are, how the process works, and what the possible outcomes are.

What we can deal with

You should bring your complaint to RICS if you're unhappy with how a surveyor has treated you, and you're not satisfied with how they've responded to your complaint.

We have rules about the standards of service our members should offer their clients. If your surveyor is found to have broken these, we can take action.

What we can deal with

To give some examples, we would investigate if:

- A surveyor does not have a complaints handling procedure or fails to follow the one he or she does have;
- There is evidence that a surveyor has acted despite an undeclared conflict of interest;
- There is evidence that a surveyor has misused your money, or does not have proper insurance cover;
- A surveyor has been charged with, or convicted of, a criminal offence.

What we can't deal with

While we can deal with complaints about service and conduct standards, it's important to note that we are not able to deal with complaints about a surveyor's professional competency. So if your issue relates to the accuracy of a survey report, for instance, we are unlikely to be able to help. You may be better pursuing your complaint through the member's own complaints handling procedure or the small claims court.

If you're looking for financial compensation, please note that RICS cannot deliver this – we can discipline, suspend or expel our members, but we cannot award any compensation. If this is what you want, don't waste your time complaining to RICS – instead, take your complaint to the Surveyors and Valuers Arbitration Scheme (via your surveyor's own complaints handling procedure) or the small claims court.

What will happen

We will ask you to fill in a form, and supply any relevant material you have to back up your complaint. Your complaint will be acknowledged within 14 days – and you will be given a reference, which you should use when you contact us in future.

If we think there are grounds to proceed, and we have your permission, we'll send a copy of your form, plus any attached evidence, to the surveyor concerned. He or she will have 14 days to respond to your complaint. You should receive a copy of this response.

If we decide there are insufficient grounds to investigate, we'll let you know, and explain why. If this happens, you are, of course, then free to pursue your complaint through other channels – see our leaflet *How to complain* for your options.

If we do decide to investigate further, depending on its seriousness, your complaint may then be considered by the Professional Conduct Panel, or a Disciplinary Board.

Both groups are made up of a mix of RICS and lay members.

Professional Conduct Panel

If the Professional Conduct Panel decides against your surveyor, it can:

- Refer your case on to the Disciplinary Board, if they feel it is sufficiently serious;
- Note that there has been a technical breach of the rules (but impose no penalty);
- Issue a reprimand to your surveyor;
- Issue a severe reprimand;
- Request him or her to undertake to change their practice in some respect;
- Order the publication of its decision;
- Require a contribution towards our costs for the hearing.

The Professional Conduct Panel meets six times a year. It may take more than one meeting to conclude your case.

Disciplinary Board

A Disciplinary Board is convened to deal with more serious cases. If it decides against your surveyor, it can:

- Issue him or her with a reprimand;
- Issue a severe reprimand;
- Oblige him or her to undertake to change their practice in some respect;
- Impose a fine;
- Suspend your surveyor;
- Expel him or her from RICS, and from practising as a chartered surveyor.

How else do we protect your interests?

RICS has a number of other measures in place to protect your interests. For instance:

- It is compulsory for RICS members to have a complaints handling procedure, and to make a clear written account of this freely available to the public;
- It is compulsory for RICS members to have proper professional indemnity insurance policy with an approved broker. This means that, if you are awarded damages in court, for instance, your surveyor should be in a position to pay;
- It is compulsory for RICS members to belong to our Clients' Money Protection Scheme. Assuming that they follow our rules, your money should be safe;
- The Surveyors and Valuers Arbitration Scheme – administered by the Institute of Arbitrators – is there, if you're looking for arbitration rather than court action. You can access this scheme only via your surveyor's complaints handling procedure.

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