

Upkeeping Appearances: Is property maintenance worth it?

When it comes to running London's most desirable residences, the old proverb "a stitch in time saves nine" is as true today as it ever was, says Bill Shipton...

Views • By Bill Shipton • 28th March 2018

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Homes in the capital are, for most, the single most expensive – and valuable – asset we possess.

And yet while everyone ensures their cars are regularly serviced, the majority of homeowners won't have an annual maintenance plan in place for their property, and as a result end up paying much more than they should due to a "fix it when it breaks" attitude.



A householder who knows us well, but who wasn't a customer, recently returned early one Saturday morning from an overseas business trip to find his house cold;

his boiler, which hadn't been serviced for a number of years, had stopped working. By Sunday evening everything had been replaced, the home was warm again and he could, at last, shower, but he was £4,000 the poorer. His frustration at the cost, inconvenience and waste of his weekend are all examples of the benefits of investing in a planned programme of property maintenance.

Time and time again we are reminded of the old proverb “*a stitch in time saves nine*” as householders realise that by adopting a “spend to save” policy ends up saving them thousands of pounds each year. While all of us would prefer not to pay anything on property maintenance this will not work in the longer term. With so many moveable parts, property owners too often forget a dishwasher here, a boiler there, air conditioning, burglar alarms, gas hobs, gutters, satellite and tv aerials or the fridge freezer most of which need checking if not servicing on a regular basis – indeed some insurance policies are invalid if a service hasn't been carried out within the previous 12 months.

“A customer living in the Boltons was delighted to discover that the annual cost of his property's maintenance had fallen from £350,000 to £125,000”

Property management audits are a good way to make sure that nothing is forgotten with every possible eventuality from moth infestation in the lady of the household's dressing room to the likelihood of external drains becoming blocked being checked.

A homeowner in the Boltons was delighted to discover a year after carrying out an audit and running a planned property maintenance programme, that the annual cost of maintaining his property had fallen from £350,000 to £125,000.

In our experience, the items that get forgotten most often by households are:

- Boiler servicing
- Heating system servicing
- Appliance servicing
- Water hygiene and testing
- External property maintenance (most often roofs)
- Fire alarms and CO2 detectors

Across London the most frequent maintenance issues reflect these overlooked areas:

- Boilers (malfunction, leakage, lack of heating/hot water etc)

- Appliance failures
- Security systems
- Water leakages (taps, pipes, radiators, tanks, drains, gutters)
- Drainage (blockages, leaks)

Increasingly, smart technology is playing its part in property management. Remote monitoring means that potential faults in critical equipment such as boilers, air conditioning, refrigeration and electrical systems can be identified, assessed and repaired before they happen.

When problems are identified, real-time alerts are sent automatically to those who can resolve the issue before it becomes a problem – and long before it becomes critical.