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ASK THE EXPERTS

The lettings agent

My son and his wife live in a flat for which they pay rent and a recurring fee to the managing agent. Two weeks ago, during heavy rain, water started to drip through the ceiling near the central light fitting. The agent maintains that, because the leak appears to be due to a dislodged ridge tile, the landlord is under no obligation to repair. They have tried to contact the building's owner, who is in Australia, but nothing has happened. What should my son do?

PJ, by email

It seems that the freeholder of the building has been unable to make a repair that should really be carried out as a matter of urgency. It is a shame the property manager has not been more proactive. Your son's landlord has a duty to fulfil the statutory obligations placed on him in terms of repair and maintenance. Given the potential for further structural damage, a common-sense approach would be for your son's landlord to arrange the repair, then liaise with the owner of the building to seek reimbursement. There will likely be a common repair fund, and the owner may well be able to make an insurance claim if the tile has been dislodged by strong winds.

Frank Webster is a director at the Oxford branch of the lettings agency Finders Keepers; finders.co.uk

The solicitor

I purchased a property last July, and the seller's report clearly stated that there was no Japanese knotweed. I have since noticed some in the garden – the neighbours claim the previous owner was aware of it. What can I do?

DD, by email

The principle of caveat emptor, or "buyer beware", applies to property, so you should carry out your own inspections before making a purchase. The buyer should also make all necessary inquiries of the vendor – and, if the latter answers incorrectly or untruthfully, the buyer will have a claim for misrepresentation if he relies on that information and suffers loss as a result. If the seller was aware of the knotweed and/or failed to check the position before answering the pre-contract inquiries, you would have a claim for damages. If the knotweed spreads from your property to your neighbour's, you may be held liable for damages – deal with it quickly and seek to recover costs from the seller.

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