

12 SHOP IN



# Ross Hand

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<b>Godwyn House</b> <b>SURBITON</b>	Studio flat	<b>£625 pcm Furn</b>
<b>Glamorgan Road</b> <b>HAMPTON WICK</b>	1 bed conv. flat	<b>£775 pcm Furn</b>
<b>Harrowdene Gardens</b> <b>TEDDINGTON</b>	2 bed flat	<b>£850 pcm Un/F</b>
<b>Eisenhower House</b> <b>HAMPTON WICK</b>	2 bed flat	<b>£900 pcm Un/F</b>
<b>Queens Reach</b> <b>KINGSTON</b>	1 bed riverside apartment	<b>£950 pcm Un/F</b>
<b>Cherwell Court</b> <b>TEDDINGTON</b>	2 bed apartment	<b>£995 pcm Un/F</b>
<b>Wren House</b> <b>HAMPTON WICK</b>	2 bed apartment	<b>£1,000 pcm Furn</b>
<b>Hamble Court</b> <b>TEDDINGTON</b>	2 bed apartment	<b>£1,200 pcm Furn</b>
<b>Hamble Court</b> <b>TEDDINGTON</b>	2 bed apartment	<b>£1,500 pcm Furn</b>
<b>Broom Water West</b> <b>TEDDINGTON</b>	3 bed apartment	<b>£1,500 pcm Furn</b>

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## Dressed to impress

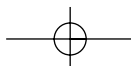
Nervously I awaited the arrival of the house doctors. On seeing two tall, well-dressed women approaching my flat armed with a camera, notepads and tape measures I became increasingly concerned. They bore an uncanny similarity to Trinny and Susannah from Channel 4's What Not To Wear – the women who have reduced their victims to tears with scathing comments about their lack of fashion sense. Would Jane Cooper and Sharon Johnston cruelly mock the style of my home?

"We've been compared to Trinny and Susannah before, but we're not as nasty," laughs Sharon. "We never comment on anyone's taste, we're here because we want the selling of your home to be a successful business transaction." Treating your property like a business is the motto of Sharon and Jane (pictured right), founders of Dressed2Sell, a house doctor consultancy in South West London, which offers a range of services designed to sell or let properties faster and for the best market price. Follow their advice on de-cluttering and re-designing your home for a modest investment, they claim, and you could receive a minimum 10-fold return when your house sells.

"This flat would cost just £500 to bring it to an acceptable standard for marketing to potential buyers," states Jane. "This isn't high-end interior design, it's about spending a small amount of money to get the biggest difference. Your flat needs neutralising."

Hmmm, sounded interesting. Jane and Sharon went off on a tour of the flat to make a list of things that needed changing (while I prayed the sink was clean), and took pictures to illustrate their report. From there, the client has the option of using the report and employing their own builders or painters to do repairs, or Sharon and Jane can take over the project themselves. "We can pull people in to work with us from decorators to storage companies, plus we will source props for your home that you can hire or buy," says Sharon.

"When somebody has always had their furniture in the same place, they can't see beyond that. Most people tend to hoard, they don't want to throw anything away," says Jane. "We help them see that





they are moving to a new home and starting a new life but they can't do that until they have cut their emotional ties." I admit to feeling rather emotional myself when my shelves heaving with videos, CDs piled up on the floor, magazines scattered on the sofa and mismatching furniture – including my prized possession, a 70s-style bar – started disappearing from my living room.

"You're selling the prospective buyer a lifestyle concept," continues Sharon. "The main problem in this flat is there's nowhere to sit down and eat. By putting a dining table in, you're showing the buyer what they could have." A dainty white cloth was put on a table, brought in by Sharon and Jane. It was then laid up with gold coloured plate chargers, plates, cutlery, coasters and champagne glasses. "The chargers and coasters aren't expensive, but you can buy types that are, so it gives an aspirational feel."

But overloading a room with videos and CDs doesn't. "No buyer wants to see clutter everywhere, it gives the impression that your flat has nowhere to store anything," says Sharon. "Keep 10 of your favourite videos, books and CDs out, and put the rest in storage to make things simple." Next on the list: de-personalise. "If a home is too personal it may not be so appealing to someone else," Jane adds. "Replace your photos of friends and family with large prints on the walls which complement the colours in the room instead."

Dark and pokey is another no-no. "Light and space is paramount so use any tricks to create that," says Sharon. The blue throw on my cream sofa was discarded and a cream throw added instead, which actually did make the room look much brighter. Finally, a focal point was needed, Sharon and Jane placed a huge vase of flowers on the bay window sill to draw the eye towards it. "Fresh flowers are difficult to maintain so buy good quality silk flowers instead," she adds.

When Sharon and Jane had finished transforming the room it looked immaculate, almost like a show home in fact, but then that's the point. I couldn't live like this in the long-term but looking at it through the eyes of a buyer it had instant appeal, plus they'd given me some great ideas. "People like their houses so much after we've finished, they wish they could stay," says Sharon. "One woman

said she should have got us in 30 years ago."

If you'd like to hire Dressed 2 Sell, call 020 8392 6593 or 020 8439 7570, email [info@dressed2sell.co.uk](mailto:info@dressed2sell.co.uk) or log on to [www.dressed2sell.co.uk](http://www.dressed2sell.co.uk)

**Jo Wheatley**



## Get sale appeal

First impressions count and if the property looks neglected outside, people may think it will be inside, too. Avoid overflowing dustbins or peeling paint, and clean up windows and brass door knockers etc.

If the buyers can't find the property, they may drive on. Make sure the house number can be clearly seen – clip back overgrown hedges or shrubs.

Avoid overwhelming smells. Tricks include airing the property or installing anti-odour plugs.

If you can, create an eating area in the kitchen, such as a breakfast bar, as 85 per cent of buyers are looking for a kitchen diner.

Play soft music to block out unsightly sounds, such as a busy main road or nearby trains.

Put away the bathroom towels you are using and hang up new white towels for presentation.

Clear up clutter on your dressing table and keep a few of the nicer bottles out.