What to check before arranging a stairlift survey

A stairlift survey is the point where a rough idea becomes a practical plan. Before anyone measures the staircase, it helps to know which details shape the choice. A straight stair can often take a standard rail. A turning staircase, a narrow landing or a tight hallway needs closer thought. Reconditioned equipment adds another layer, because the right refurbished model has to fit the home, the user and the route up the stairs.

The aim is not to become an expert overnight. It is to gather enough information so the survey is useful. Clear notes, simple measurements and honest answers about daily use can prevent a poor match. They also make it easier to compare quotes on equal terms.

Start with the shape of the staircase

The first thing to check is the route the lift will travel. Count the number of steps, note where the staircase turns and look at the shape of each landing. A straight run is straightforward. A quarter turn or half turn changes the rail design and may affect where the chair can stop.

Curved refurbished stairlifts depend on a rail made for the exact staircase profile, so the path matters as much as the length. Note whether the bend is at the top, bottom or halfway up. A small turn can still make a big difference to the final rail. If the staircase has an unusual curve, an open centre, alternating treads or a tight spiral, flag that before the survey rather than leaving it as a surprise.

It also helps to notice the finish of the stairs and walls. Timber, carpet, plaster and painted wood may need different care during fitting. Loose banisters, worn carpet edges or uneven skirting should be mentioned, as they can affect fixing points or access.



Measure the space around the stairs

A stairlift needs room for the rail, the chair and the person using it. The measurement that often causes difficulty is not the staircase length but the clear width. Measure the usable walking width from wall or balustrade to the opposite side, especially at turns and narrow points. Do not assume the widest part is typical.

Landing space matters too. At the top, there needs to be enough room for the seat to turn safely and for the user to move away from the stairs. At the bottom, think about where a footrest would sit when the chair is parked. Hallway doors, radiators, shoe cups, wall fixtures and furniture can all create conflicts.

Pay attention to the approach. A user may be coming from a wheelchair, walking frame or another room. The chair needs to be reachable from that approach, and the exit needs to feel steady. A lift that technically fits but leaves no room to transfer is not a good result.

Check how the user will actually sit and travel

Stairlifts are used by people with different needs. Some users can stand and transfer with little help. Others need a stable seat, arm support and a clear path for a carer. Before the survey, think through the normal routine rather than the best-case version of it.

Useful points include:

- Whether the user can sit down and stand up without help, and which side is easier.

- Whether a walking frame or wheelchair stays at the bottom and top of the stairs.
- Whether the user needs help with a safety belt or with foot placement.
- Whether the journey is usually daytime, nighttime or both.
- Whether another person needs to use the same lift.

These details affect the seat position, controls and accessories. A powered seat rotation can help where hip movement is limited. A folding footrest may reduce obstruction at the bottom. A powered hinge rail can help where a rail would otherwise block a doorway or walkway. None of these features should be chosen in isolation. The survey is where fit, comfort and safe transfer are weighed together.

Look at access, power and building limits

A stairlift needs power, but the practical question is where the supply sits and how the rail will be installed. Note the location of nearby sockets and the route a cable might take. Do not open fittings, move switches or work on electrics. If the supply seems awkward, leave that for the surveyor and a qualified professional to assess.

Walls and steps should be looked at with care. A rail is fixed to the staircase, not simply to a wall beside it. Soft timber, crumbling plaster, odd step depths or a staircase with open risers may need a different fixing approach. Mention any past repairs, damp patches or loose treads. These are signs that a professional assessment is needed before fitting.



Doorways also deserve attention. A rail that projects into a hall can catch on furniture or block a route. Check the swing of internal doors, the width of the hallway and the position of the nearest light switch. Small obstacles often decide whether a layout feels easy or irritating every day.

Think about the reconditioned side of the decision

Buying refurbished equipment is not only about finding a lower price. The important question is what has been renewed, what has been replaced and what support remains after fitting. A reconditioned stairlift should be judged on its condition, age, parts availability and suitability for the staircase. A good price means little if the model cannot be serviced easily or if parts are hard to source.

Ask for the refurbishment standard in plain terms. What checks were carried out? Which worn parts were replaced? Is there a warranty, and what does it cover? Does the quote include fitting, servicing and removal of old equipment? These points turn a vague bargain into something that can be compared properly.

Weight capacity is another practical check. It should suit the user without relying on guesswork. If more than one person might use the lift, include that in the discussion. The seat, footrest and arms should also suit the user's build and posture. Comfort affects whether the lift is used regularly or avoided.

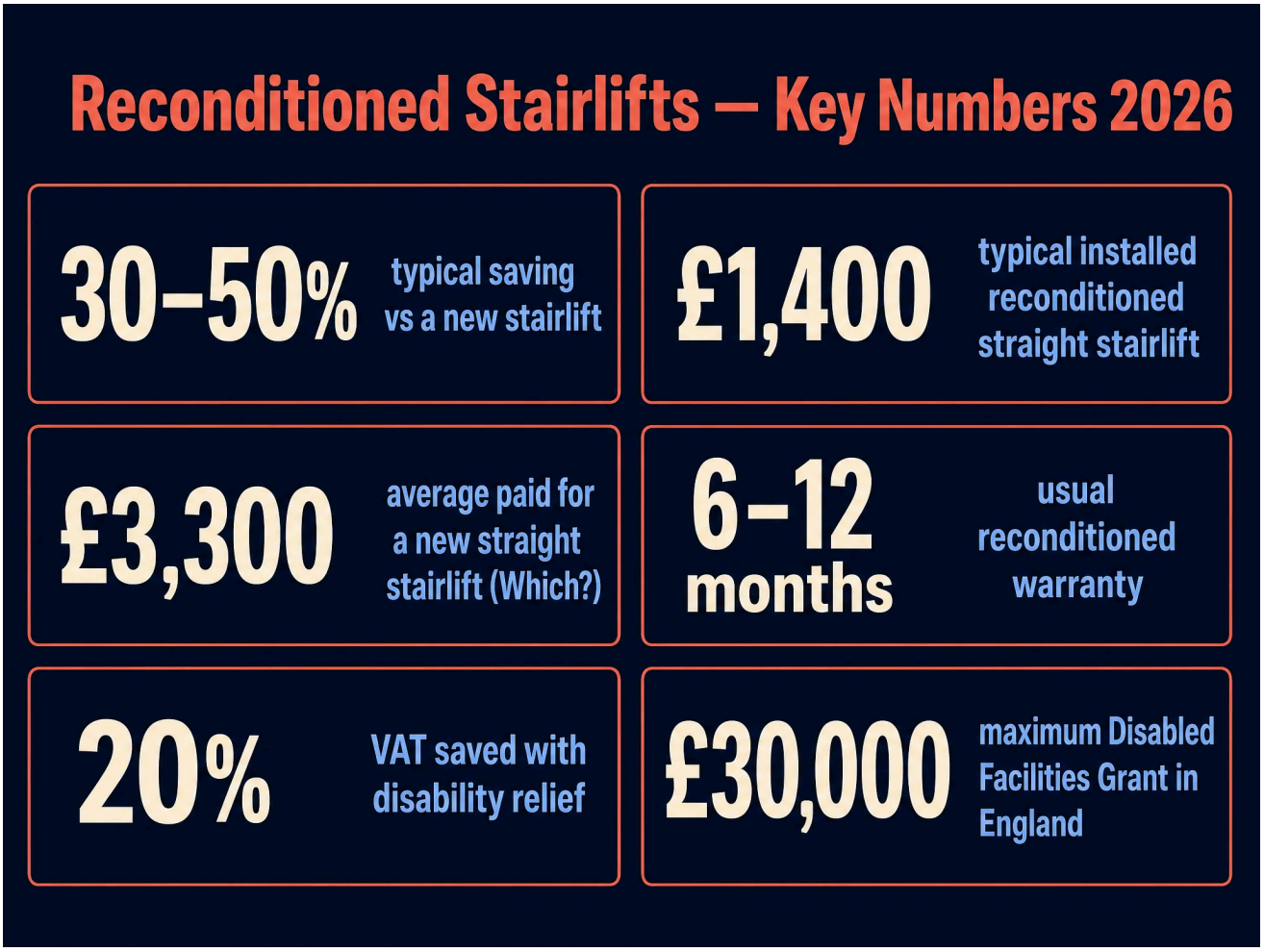
Note the funding and timing questions early

Funding can shape the decision, especially when a stairlift is needed after a change in mobility. Some buyers self-fund, some ask family members to help and some explore local support or grants. Eligibility and availability vary, so it is sensible to ask before committing to a particular option.

Timing matters as well. If stairs are becoming unsafe, temporary arrangements may be needed while measurements, refurbishment and fitting are arranged. If the need is urgent, make that clear. If the home may be adapted later, mention it. A flexible layout can be more useful than one that solves only today's problem.

Questions worth having ready

A survey runs better when the main facts are close at hand. The list below keeps the conversation focused without needing any technical vocabulary.



- Number of steps, turns, landings and any awkward narrow points.
- Usable stair width and clear space at the top and bottom.
- User needs, including transfers, posture and whether help is available.
- Any doors, furniture, radiators or sockets close to the likely rail route.
- Questions about refurbishment standard, warranty, servicing and total quoted work.

Take a few photographs from the bottom, the top and each turn. A phone camera is enough. Photographs help show details that are hard to describe, such as a sloping ceiling, a tight bend or a doorway close to the landing. Simple sketch notes can also help, especially if measurements were taken at more than one point.

Make the survey a working conversation

A good survey is not a quick glance at the stairs. It should cover the rail route, the user's needs, the condition of the staircase and the practical details of living with the lift. If something is unclear, ask for it to be explained in ordinary language. The same applies to any suggestion that changes the original plan. A smaller seat, a different rail position or a different model may solve one problem while creating another.

Before arranging the visit, gather the measurements, note the daily routine and write down the questions that matter most. That preparation helps the surveyor see the real situation. It also helps the buyer compare reconditioned options with a clearer head, focusing on fit, safety and long-term usability rather than the label alone.