

Bigger by design

A spacious extension has given this family's welcoming home a sociable new lease of life

PROPERTY DETAILS

Type of house
Three-bedroom 1930s semi
Location
Leeds suburb
Purchase price
£70,000
Money spent
£40,000
What it's worth now
£345,000



Above Nicky with sons Jacob (left?) and Lewis on the doorstep of their extended semi-detached home in Leeds

Below In the hallway, mirrors were inserted into the original window spaces, which were blocked up when the extension was built. Nicky painted the cabinet by the door for a distressed effect



Left Travertine tiles with a glass mosaic strip decorate the floor in the dining area. The tiles, along with the solid oak table and leather chairs, were bought through the trade. Crystals hang from the mirror as unusual Christmas decorations

Above A festive feast is laid out on a traditional table with sprigs of holly and sparkly crackers. The dresser in the background is draped in a black garland to match the tree

NICKY YOUNG, 39, runs her own display and exhibition-styling company. She lives with husband **Dave, 41**, the director of his own building firm, and their teenage sons **Jacob, 16**, and **Lewis, 15**, in a semi-detached home on the outskirts of Leeds. Nicky says:

When we moved here 10 years ago, the house had been empty for two years and was rented out before that. It was absolutely filthy and had dog hair everywhere. There was a tiny scullery kitchen with one cupboard on the wall, and it was only big enough to comfortably fit one person at a time. So, not long after moving in, we added a conservatory to the back of the house to give us more kitchen/dining space, which suited us pretty well for a few years.

Then, four years ago, we decided we really needed more living space so Dave knocked the conservatory down and built an extension, which stands in the same space as the conservatory and extends round the side of the house. Dave did all the work in his spare time, so it took several long months to complete. In the extension, our kitchen and dining area are at the rear of the house, while there's

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Above left Golden baubles arranged in a dish create a stunning centrepiece-

Above Nicky enjoys preparing a Christmas feast for the family

Left The American fridge in the kitchen is from Curry's, and is the large enough to store all the food the family needs over the festive season

Nicky loves the bright, airy feel of her new kitchen. Pale wooden units contrast with a glossy black worktop, while slatted wooden blinds allow a perfect amount of light to filter through



a garage and an extra bedroom to the side. The extra space has been a real success and has completely changed the way we use the house. The kitchen/dining area is our main family room and all our entertaining goes on in there, from small get-togethers to full-scale parties.

Of course, the extension would have cost much more if we'd had to employ a builder, but doing it ourselves meant we could have as much extra room as was possible to build on. Some of my own hard graft has also gone into the house and saved us money. The mahogany flooring in the hallway is a case in point. My dad reclaimed it from an old mill that was being demolished when I was just a child. I remember being paid a penny per block to scrape the bitumen off. All that effort all those years ago has finally paid off – a similar reclaimed timber floor today would cost a small fortune.

While the building work was going on, the house was in turmoil. My mother would say, "I don't know how you're putting up with all this," and I'd reply, "Oh, come on! It's not that bad!" But looking back, it was pretty horrendous. I'm not a fan of ready meals, so I'd be standing in the kitchen trying to prepare a hot meal from scratch in the middle of all the chaos. It didn't make my life any easier.

Though we've been together for 18 years, Dave still surprises me. While I was away on holiday, he completely redecorated the bathroom. The colour scheme is not at all one I'd expect him to choose – chocolate walls and black wallpaper make quite a statement – but when I came home, he'd designed and decorated the whole room

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Nicky's most treasured possession

'I've put up my favourite pictures of friends and family in a set of photo frames hung outside the kitchen. Visitors always stop to have a look – they're a real conversation piece. Whenever I see any black photo frames I like, I buy them to add to my wall of photos.'





himself. The thing is, it's exactly what I would have chosen, too, and I love it!

In 2003, I started my own display and exhibition business called Dex, along with my business partner Andrea Thornton. We decorate everything from show homes to shopping centres, as well as big weddings and birthdays. We also specialise in decorating offices and private homes for the festive season. Christmas is one of our busiest times, and from October onwards we work non-stop. For most people, getting the Christmas decorations out of the loft is a real treat and signals the beginning of the holiday season. It's a bit different for me, though, because I'll already have been doing it for weeks in other people's homes. Nevertheless, I still enjoy decorating my own house for Christmas and while I'm working on someone else's tree, I'll be thinking up ideas

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Left Furniture in Nicky and Dave's bedroom is from Hammonds, while the flooring is from Costco. Nicky likes the pictures hanging above the bed because they exactly match the colour of the walls, which is Toffee by Dulux

Below The paint on the walls in 16-year-old Jacob's room was mixed by Nicky's decorator. All the furniture and lighting is from Ikea, including the large day bed, and makes for clean-looking, sleek-style room

'I enjoy decorating my own house for Christmas, and while I'm working on someone else's tree, I'll be thinking up ideas to decoarte ours'

OUR SPECIAL CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

'We have a quirky tradition in our house – the boys get new pyjamas on Christmas Eve. At least, they always have done, but it's a bit more difficult these days because they're teenagers and usually sleep in their boxer shorts.

'I always decorate the house, even if we're not going to be here for the week of Christmas. Some years we've been away from home on a skiing holiday, but before we leave I still make sure that the house is fully decked out.

I must admit that I cut it fine with the present-wrapping because I always do it on the night of Christmas Eve and then put the gifts straight under the tree. On Christmas morning, we have friends round and we open a bottle of champagne to drink together. It feels like a very civilised way to kick things off.'





Left In the ensuite bathroom, the shelf on top of the travertine tiles is made from slate from an old bath panel. The black border was made from leftover samples of travertine tiles, and the mirror is from Costco

Above The dramatic chocolate colour on the walls in the family bathroom creates a neutral yet warming effect. The mix of tiles surrounding the bath and shower are travertine

for how I'm going to decorate ours.'

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NICKY'S INSIDE STORY

Patience is a necessary virtue when living without water or a functioning kitchen during a renovation

'We had some frantic moments while we were doing up the house. At one point, the kitchen units were in but we didn't have plumbed-in water or even a sink. The water dispenser on the fridge had been plumbed in though, so I filled the kettle from that. I would also fill a jug with water from there, then take it and the dirty dishes upstairs and wash them in the bath. When Dave installed the units, the granite company had to take a template and cut worktops to the right size, and for a while I had no surfaces to put anything on. So when it was all done, and I had a working kitchen again with a fully functioning sink and worktops, it was such a relief.'

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE 'WHERE TO BUY' PAGE AT BACK OF ISSUE