

Contractor Questionnaire

This checklist will help you ask the right questions of any contractor you are asking to quote to do work on or around your property.

ABOUT THE CONTRACTOR

Some tradesman might be members of a trade association, an official certification scheme (such as Gas Safe for heating engineers, or a Part P scheme for electricians), a local authority approved scheme or any other supporting organisation. Don't just look at the badges on the van, follow these claims up and make sure.

When meeting with the person representing the company, find out who they are. Do they run the business? are they the person thats going to be carrying out the work on the property?

Always insist on a landline telephone number, not just a mobile. If it's not a local number, find out why not. Be very wary of those only willing to give you just a mobile number.

First Name:

Surname:

Company:

Position:

City:

Address:

Telephone (landline):

Mobile Phone:

Email:

Company Website:

How long have they been trading:

Other Details:

What qualifications do they or their team have:

What experience have they had carrying out work like this before:

Are they part of any trade associations or other body:

ABOUT THE WORK

If you're supplying the materials or want the contractor to use your choice of materials, you need to discuss this with them in advance as it may affect insurance and guarantees later on. If your job involves architectural or structural drawings, make sure you get these documents attached to a proper legal contract.

Be careful about the use of sub-contractors. Find out who they will be and check them out, just like you are doing with this contractor. If any extra work or changes are likely to arise, you should agree with the contractor in advance how you will deal with this. You should try to keep a written record of any changes that are agreed and be suspicious if you are suddenly being charged for extra expenses. If you have agreed a fixed price beforehand for the work, you should not have to pay for any extras and make sure to ask for receipts.

Describe the work:

Will they source all the materials and equipment?

 Yes No

Are there any drawings or specifications?

 Yes No

Will they be using any sub-contractors?

 Yes No

Are any variations or extra charges likely?

 Yes No

Start date:

Finish date:

Working hours:

Most good contractor won't be available immediately unless they've just had a cancellation, so be prepared to wait. Check when the tradesman expects to be working on site, what time do they start and do they work weekends etc..

Reasons why the work could possibly be delayed?

Jobs can over-run or turn out to be more complicated than you first thought. But do try and get a feel for how long the tradesman thinks they'll be on site. Will the tradesman be on site for consecutive days?

Do they have permission to use your toilet, play a radio, store materials in the property, use your kitchen to boil a kettle? if they do lay out the house ground rules. Depending on the type of work, it's important you know what tidying up (if any) will be done. Check who will organise and pay for the skip delivery and collection, and if there may be charges for waste disposal.

Will property access be required?

 Yes No

Do they need to move furniture?

 Yes No

Will they tidy up each day?

 Water Electricity

Do they need access to utilities?

 Water Elec

Is scaffolding required?

 Yes No

Is a skip required?

 Water Electricity

PLANNING AND BUILDING REGULATIONS

It is usually your responsibility as the client to apply for and obtain all the necessary planning approvals and consents. It is also your responsibility to apply for and obtain all the necessary conservation approvals and consents.

Where the work needs to be inspected or approved by a Building Inspector (council or private approved inspector), it is the tradesman's responsibility to ensure these inspections and approvals are carried out. For some electrical and gas / heating work, the tradesman may be able to 'self-certify'. Discuss this with the contractor and find out what they do to ensure Building Regulations approval.

A good contractor will be very aware of health and safety regulations on all jobs. It applies to any project, big or small. Make sure you are aware of any health and safety risks to you or any other occupier of the building. Do you have guests, family or pets in the property and what needs to be done to reduce any risk of injury or damage? Discuss with the tradesman what needs to happen to minimise and manage these risks.

Planning permission?

Yes

No

Building regs compliance?

Yes

No

Conservation officer?

Yes

No

Health & safety risks?

Notifiable under CDM regs?

Yes

No

Construction work is notifiable to the HSE if the construction phase is expected to last more than 30 days or 500 person days of construction work. The tradesman will usually handle this. Contact the HSE for further information.

GUARANTEES CERTIFICATES & INSURANCE

You must find out what options are available to you - you may be able to buy a warranty to cover the work and there may be a range of different policies. For example, Allbase insists all approved contractors offer you the opportunity to buy a warranty giving you some increased protection if the firm should go out of business.

If the company is Allbase Approved and the work is worth more than £250, the company should offer you the opportunity to purchase the Allbase Basecare extended warranty.. This covers rectification of defects or major damage in the event the approved contractor ceases to trade. Discuss warranties with your contractor and be aware that the paperwork usually needs sorting out before work on your job can start.

What type of warranty is provided?

Public liability insurance?

Yes No

Public liability insurance covers the tradesman and you in case someone gets hurt on your site. Under law the policy must be available for you to view if you so wish. It's always a good idea to check the insurance won't run out before your job is finished.

Accidental damage insurance?

Yes No

It is best to find a tradesman with insurance cover in case there is accidental damage to your property.

Instructions / Receipts supplied?

Yes No

Confirm with the tradesman that at the end of the job, they will leave you with all supporting documentation applicable to the work carried out.

Defects liability

It is often a good idea to agree with your contractor a period of time during which it is his duty and right to make good (at his own cost) any defects which appear.

Dispute procedure

Good contractors will have a clear and open policy for how they deal with any disputes. This will usually involve a meeting with you to discuss any grievance and, if necessary, access to an independent review, mediation, conciliation or arbitration. It's always worth checking you understand exactly what these things mean and what redress you could get if things go wrong. Be warned though: refusing to let a tradesman put things right can affect your legal rights later on.

PAYING FOR THE WORK

An 'estimate' is only an approximate idea of the cost and a detailed scope of the work required (with all costs) need to be agreed with the contractor before they start work. This will then form a 'quotation' which is a fixed cost and should be detailed in writing. Any changes to costs during the contract for whatever the reason, should be approved by you in writing before being carried out by the contractor.

Rough estimate (inc. VAT):

How long is the quote valid?

Hourly / daily rate (inc. VAT):

Timescale (hrs / days):

Deposit required?

Ask the contractor for their hourly and daily rates as this will help you if there any additions / changes to the contract.

If your job is charged on an hourly or daily rate instead of a fixed price, talk to your tradesman about how much time the work might take.

Try to avoid paying deposits, and don't ever pay the whole amount up front. If you do need to pay a deposit, it should never exceed 15% of the contract value.

Cost includes all materials/ equipment

Yes

No

In some cases such as sanitary ware or kitchen units / appliances you may have decided to source these yourself. You need to clearly define in writing with the contractor any items they will not have to supply as part of this contract.

Will interim or stage payments be needed?

Yes

No

If materials need to be bought in advance by the contractor, it is reasonable that you pay a fair percentage of these costs. But always be very clear and schedule when payments might be needed. Payments should only be made when each stage of work is completed to the agreed specification and standard.

VAT reg. number:

Do they have a cooling of period?

Payment terms

Since 2008 there have been regulations in the UK which allow you to change your mind after you have accepted a quote or entered into a contract. These are the 'Cancellation of Contracts Made in a Consumer's Home or Place of Work etc. Regulations 2008'. Check that the contractor can provide you with the 'Notice of the Right to Cancel'.

Warning: Do not pay upfront and do not agree to pay cash-in-hand. Find out how quickly you will have to pay invoices. This is usually between 7 and 30 days.

CONTRACTOR REFERENCES

Always take up references. Written references or a telephone call can sometimes be falsified. The larger and more costly your job is the more important it can be to go and see for yourself recent work done by the tradesman and talk to the owners of those properties. Don't ever rely on websites with customer reviews of tradesmen, as these are notoriously unreliable and open to abuse.

Name, address and contact information

Name, address and contact information

Name, address and contact information