START WITH QUESTIONS, NOT PROMISES

A HOMEOWNER’S GUIDE

How to find reliable building contractors online.

Search results, directories, photographs and reviews can help you build a shortlist, but they cannot tell you everything about a builder or the quality of a particular job. Use them to decide what to verify directly. Ask clear questions, take time to compare the details and don’t feel pressured to commit on the spot.

This guide is general consumer information for UK homeowners, not legal or financial advice. Rules and consumer protections can vary depending on where you live and how the agreement is made.

BEFORE YOU APPOINT ANYONE

Use online research as a starting point. Check the business, look for relevant evidence, compare like-for-like written quotes and agree the

01

Check the business identity

Look for a consistent trading name and contact details. If the contractor operates through a limited company, check the company record using the official Companies House service. A register entry alone is not an endorsement or proof of workmanship.

02

Look for relevant, verifiable work

Find examples similar to your project, not just polished stock-style images. Ask who carried out the work, what the scope was and whether you can speak with a previous customer. A photo is evidence of what is visible, not a full project record.

03

Read reviews with care

Look across more than one source. Read the detail and dates, notice whether feedback concerns work like yours, and be cautious of copied wording or reviews that can’t be checked. Never rely on a star score alone.

04

Compare written quotations

Get written quotes based on the same brief or drawings. Check scope, materials, inclusions, exclusions, provisional items, access and waste arrangements. Ask how extra work is agreed and priced before it goes ahead.

05

Verify relevant insurance and credentials

Ask what insurance is in place for your project and request current evidence where appropriate. If a contractor claims membership, accreditation or a guarantee, check the claim directly with the named organisation and confirm exactly what it covers.

06

Agree terms before work starts

Make sure the contract or written agreement covers the scope, price or pricing method, programme assumptions, payment stages, changes, responsibilities and how concerns will be handled. Avoid relying on verbal promises alone.

COMPARE THE SAME JOB, NOT JUST THE TOTAL

A simple comparison method.

Before asking for a quote, write a short brief: what you want done, where, what you already know and what is still undecided. If you have drawings or specifications, share the same versions with each contractor.

- Check what work and materials each quote includes.
- Note exclusions, assumptions and provisional sums.
- Ask who handles approvals, waste and any specialist work.
- Confirm how price changes and extra work must be approved.
- Check payment stages, programme assumptions and responsibilities.

A low headline figure may exclude important items. Ask for clarification before treating quotations as comparable.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

Ask before you agree.

- Can you explain what is included and excluded in the written quote?
- Who will carry out the work and who is my main contact?
- What insurance applies to this work, and can I see current evidence?
- How will changes, additional work and any price changes be agreed?
- What are the payment stages and what do they relate to?

CONSUMER GUIDANCE

Use independent sources too.

For more detailed advice about home improvement contracts and finding a trader, consult established consumer and industry guidance. Membership or a directory listing is one signal to check, not a substitute for reading the terms and verifying the specific claim.

Citizens Advice: before you get building work done

TrustMark: tips for finding a tradesperson

Federation of Master Builders: choosing a builder

COMMON QUESTIONS

FAQs: checking contractors online.

How many quotes should I get?

There is no fixed number, but more than one comparable written quotation can help you understand differences in scope and assumptions. Give each contractor the same brief and compare like with like.

Is a very low quote a good sign?

Not necessarily. Check that every quote describes the same work, materials, access, waste removal, provisional items and exclusions. Ask questions about anything that is unclear or substantially different.

Should I pay a deposit before work begins?

Payment arrangements vary by project. Agree any deposit, stage payments and final payment in writing before committing. Make sure the schedule is clear and tied to agreed work or milestones.

Do online reviews prove a builder is reliable?

Reviews can help, but they are only one source of information. Look at the detail, recency and relevance, and ask for references or examples of similar work where available.

FOR HOMEOWNERS IN OUR AREA

Looking for a Sheffield building contractor?

All Round Builders carries out roofing, house extensions, garage conversions, driveways and garden work across South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire. Explore supplied project photos or contact us to discuss your plans and receive a written quotation for an agreed scope.

View supplied project photos | Contact All Round Builders

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