

# Checklist for choosing a trader



Renfrewshire  
Council

Please follow this checklist to help you choose a reliable trader

**Are they members of a Trusted Trader scheme or a trade association?**

Check their credentials. Trusted Trader schemes usually provide feedback from previous customers. Trade associations usually provide a free checking service for customers to validate a tradesman's claim to membership.

Your notes

**Ensure the trader has a physical address**

You should avoid employing a trader that is unable to provide a home or business address (not a PO Box number or virtual address) and a landline telephone number.

Your notes

**What work exactly do you want carried out?**

Write down a description of the work you want carried out in as detailed a way as you can. The clearer you are about the work you want done, the more likely that you will be able to describe it to your chosen trader.

Your notes

**How much will it cost?**

Get three written quotations from different firms for the job. An estimate is different and is simply often a rough guess on how much something will cost. A quotation will give you a fixed price which you have in writing. If you provide a specification and drawings for the work, you can be sure the quotes you receive will be on a like for like basis.

Your notes

**Is VAT included?**

Ask whether VAT has been included or not? This can often be a nasty shock if not planned for. Traders have an obligation to include VAT in their prices when dealing with consumers.

Your notes

**Changes**

Make sure any changes in the job specification are in writing and a new quotation is provided and approved before work starts.

Your notes

**Are Local Authority approvals required?**

Find out if you require any planning permission or building regulation approval before any works begin. Your local authority planning department should be able to advise you.

Your notes

**Neighbours**

Does the work you are planning affect neighbouring properties? If so it can save an awful lot of problems if you speak to them about what you are doing before any work starts, especially if a boundary wall is an issue with the planned works.

Your notes

**Is your chosen company qualified and capable of carrying out the work?**

Make sure you check the company's qualifications and experience of carrying out similar work. If they are not already members of a Trusted Trader scheme, ask to see references from other customers. Check online for any customer feedback they may have.

Your notes



### How long should the work take and when can they start?

If it is a big job, make sure you get start and completion dates in writing.

Your notes



### Do they give any guarantees?

Ask if the work is covered by a guarantee, how long the guarantee lasts and whether it is backed by insurance so that, should the company cease trading, any defects will still be remedied. An insurance-backed warranty is desirable, especially if the job is big.

Your notes



### Do they give you confidence?

Think about how a company responds to your enquiry; did they turn up on time, how well did they listen to find out what you need to have done, how carefully did they survey and measure? Ask when you can expect the quotation and check whether it arrives on time.

Your notes



### Is the price acceptable?

If the quotation from your preferred company seems high it is worth talking to them to see if there is any way the price could be reduced. Ask for any revised price and specification in writing.

Your notes



### Never pay the whole amount up front

Always keep a percentage of the cost back until the job is finished and you are satisfied with the works.

Your notes



### Be careful about who you are paying

Always pay the company doing the work and never the individual person UNLESS the company is owned and run by a single individual.

Your notes



### Get an invoice that includes the VAT

Make sure your invoices are accurate and itemises the VAT separately.

Your notes



### Get a receipt

Check that the trader will give you a receipt for every payment made - getting a receipt is fundamental, because without a receipt you have no proof of payment.

Your notes

## WHEN YOU ACCEPT THE QUOTATION.....

For large jobs, you should form a contract with the trader. The more detailed the contract is, the better. Verbal agreements can lead to misunderstanding.

If your contract is for goods, as well as service, it helps if these are individually priced.

Check again how long it will take, what time they will arrive and leave and if they will come every day until the job is complete.

If the work is inside your home, check whether you need to remove any furniture or carpets and curtains. Ask what safeguards will the company make to protect your home? Do they have Public Liability insurance cover and for how much?

Check whether a deposit is required and when final payment is due, it is always preferable to leave money outstanding until the job has been completed. Be sure to obtain written receipts for all payments.

If any changes are required to the original specification, discuss it with the tradesman and give written instructions. Request a revised quotation/contract.