



FACT SHEET

FINDING A BUILDER AND TENDERING

(1) CLEARLY DEFINE YOUR NEEDS

The detailed drawings will form the basis of a builder's quotation. However, it is important to understand that although very detailed they omit finishing details and personal choice items.

These elements of the build can significantly add to the overall build cost so it is important to include them into the tendering stage at some stage.

The easiest way to achieve this is to provide a room by room bullet point list to supplement the drawings. Provide as much detail as possible including:

- Do you want the builder to decorate? If so specify wall and ceiling finishes.
- Floor finishes if required.
- Door types and handles etc.
- Electrical power and lighting layout / requirements.
- Heating and radiator requirements.
- Information technology / networking / security requirements.
- Specify type of kitchens and bathrooms and whether you want the builder to source and fit or whether another company will carry out this work.



- Anything else that you want included that is not on the drawings.
- External works such as patio, steps, paths, driveways etc.

Also make sure that you inform the builder of any specific logistical information, such as:

- Are you going to be living in the house during building works?
- Any specific working time restrictions.
- Can the builders use your facilities, toilets, parking, water etc.
- Your preferred start date.
- Any work that you want to complete yourself or outsource.
- Any work carried out by nominated subcontractors - kitchen or bathroom fitting etc.
- Are you supplying any items directly?

Finally ensure that you add other information that the builder will require pricing the job such as structural engineer's details, tree survey reports, planning permission with any conditions, building regulations approval with any conditions etc.

(2) EXPERIENCE

Ensure that you find builders that have relevant experience with your type of work. For example, avoid a builder who specialises in commercial work if you are building an extension.

If possible choose a builder who is local and who has experience working in your area and with your type of house.



Check your builder's credentials to establish whether they have the relevant regulatory memberships. For example, Gas Safe for heating engineers, Part P for electricians, FENSA for window fitters etc.

(3) REFERENCES

Ask for and check several references from past clients. If possible go and visit a builder's previous work, if you cannot view the work inside then just check the quality of the building work from the outside. Research the builders online, are there any negative comments on forums etc.

Where possible approach builders who have been personally recommended by family, friends or colleagues. Alternatively take a walk in your local area and look for building projects that are in progress. Ask the homeowner whether they would recommend their builder.

(4) MEMBERSHIPS

Not all building associations are equal. The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) is one of the better organisations as they thoroughly vet their members. FMB builders will go through an extensive membership process, will have had their work verified, have been credit checked, and are required to abide to a code of conduct.

Local authority Trading Standard membership is also a good sign. Membership will usually involve a reference process and an audit of the business. Members will also have to agree to comply with consumer law, rules and regulations.

(5) CONTRACTS

Get a contract. This is essential and ensure that the contract describes the works to be carried out, the agreed quoted price and payment details. Make sure that the contract is signed by both parties.

Various building contracts are available online. The Joint Contracts Tribunal (JCT) provide a Homeowners Contract for home improvement works - ISBN:9780414050365. Alternatively, the Federation of Master Builders (FMB) offer Plain English Domestic contract for Minor Building Works.



Most small to medium sized building companies will request a deposit prior to starting works.

Many consumer websites will state that deposits should not be paid in advance. However, in practice, many builders will require some form of deposit to mobilise, purchase initial materials, goods and services. There is always a risk in paying a deposit which can be limited by taking out your own building works insurance. Check that the insurance covers loss of deposit.

(6) INSURANCES / WARRANTIES

Check the builders level of insurance. By law they should have public and employer liability insurances. Some may also have Contractor All Risk and Professional Indemnity Insurances.

For extra peace of mind there are various insurance products for building works which can cover loss of deposits, builder insolvency, incomplete works and structural warranties.

Also ensure that you contact your normal house insurance before starting works. Most will require you to register with them that you are starting building works and some will request an additional premium for the duration of the works.