

HARWOOD & ASSOCIATES



Many people find out too late that they have hired the wrong builder or plumber. Their money has been spent, the job has not been done well and it has become stressful and sometimes even traumatic.

You only need to watch the “Builders from Hell” or “Cowboy Builders” programmes on the TV or listen to “dinner party” stories to see the problem.

What you need to know is that there is no fixed pricing structure in the UK building industry anyone can charge virtually what ever they like and the standard of work can vary considerably regardless of how well qualified someone might be.

So, if you follow these simple rules you should be able to hire the right person with confidence:-

1: Ask friends, relatives or work colleagues if they have had work done by anyone whom they can recommend. Failing that ask you local Builders or Plumbers Merchants or local council Building Control Office for some names.

2: Make contact with at least 3 of these recommendations and arrange an appointment for them to come and see you.

Beware; if they don't show for this appointment without good reason you should be suspicious if they would actually turn up to do your work.

3: During the appointment do they listen to what you are saying or asking or do they force their ideas on you.

Beware; if they don't listen to you now, will they listen when they come to do the work.

4: Ask for a written estimate for the work and how long before you would receive that estimate. The estimate should spell out clearly what you have asked them to do and how they are going to do it. It should be fairly detailed and have a clear price shown including if vat is applicable.

Beware; if the estimate is later arriving than said and is very brief with little or no detail and no clear price, you need to be very cautious about using this person.

5: Ask yourself, how did you feel about this person during the appointment, did you warm to them or feel uncomfortable. Were they on time. First impressions can be a good guide.

6: Prices can vary considerably, if you are only out for the cheapest price you may regret it, many people have. A good tradesman needs to allow enough time to do the job properly, he won't want to be rushed and he will want to use good quality materials, not the cheapest.

7: Ask for references of work done for other people, at least 3 should be enough. Don't be afraid to follow these up with a phone call. If the contractor is genuine he will have cleared it with his customers and they won't mind talking to you. Ask how long they have been in their profession, experience does count for a lot.

8: If embarking on a big building job, ask to go and see some of their work and talk directly to their clients. This may take time but it is definitely worth it.

9: Read through the estimate thoroughly, make sure you understand it. If you have any queries ring and ask more questions. A reputable person won't mind answering your queries as it helps with communication and confidence for both parties.

10: Your contractor may ask for a deposit which is not unreasonable, but you should **never** give any money up-front. Agree to give a deposit on the day they start your work. **Never** pay for the whole job until after it has been completed and tested.

It is not unreasonable for someone to wait a couple of weeks for final payment so you have had the opportunity to see if the job works and is satisfactory. Or you may wish to have it inspected by a third party.

Beware; of contractors who say they need a large deposit or full payment before they start work.

Remember these simple steps:-

- 1: Get recommendations
- 2: Get a detailed estimate in writing.
- 3: Get references.
- 4: Don't go for the cheapest price.
- 5: Read the estimate thoroughly.
- 6: Never pay out before work commences.
- 7: Never pay the whole amount until after completion and testing.

Remember, there is always a reason why someone is the cheapest.