A GUIDE TO EMPLOYING TRADEPERSONS AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

USEFUL INFORMATION FOR HOME OWNERS
Where Do You Start?

If you have identified that you need to carry out repairs from your own observation or this has been highlighted in a professional survey the first thing you need to do is get a professional opinion on the work involved and anticipated costs.

If the problem is straightforward you can go straight to a tradesman. If it is complicated, big or you are not sure what is causing the problem you may want to employ someone to manage the work. Some building work requires planning permission and work that affects the structural strength of your property may need building regulations approval. North Lanarkshire Council’s Planning Department can advise you about this.

Getting Professional Help

An architect, surveyor or engineer can look at the identified problem and advise you what work needs to be done. They can also prepare a specification of works, organise and scrutinise quotes for you and then supervise the works. The appropriate professional body can provide you with a list of members in your area. To find one that suits you best approach two or three and ask:
• What experience do they have of doing similar work?
• Who will manage the work?
• What is the cost and what does it include?
• When can they start?

Using a professional may cost more but you could get better value for money and better quality work that will last longer and will be less hassle for you.

Emplying A Tradesperson

You should produce details of works you want done and send a copy to each tradesperson you ask to quote for the work. It should include types of materials to be used, quality of work, removal of rubbish, and ‘making good’ after the work is finished. If you are getting professional help, as above, they will be able to prepare the detail of works and you should check and agree to these before they are issued to tradespersons.

If you require assistance with preparing your list of works please contact North Lanarkshire Council Private Sector Section on 01698 274179 who can provide work requirement templates for major works such as re-roofing.

There are some important questions to ask tradespersons when getting quotes:
• Do they have experience of this type of work?
• Do they belong to a reputable trade organisation, and does it offer any guarantee and/or a complaints service?
• Do they have proof of indemnity insurance?
• Can they provide references or details of past clients who you can contact to discuss the contractors performance?

Agreeing On A Price

Ask for a list of works and detailed written quotations and remember to check if the prices quoted include VAT. Agree how payments will be made before the job starts. For large contracts, it is likely that the contractor will require payment in instalments. For smaller jobs the contractor may be happy to invoice once the work has been completed. Never pay for work before it is completed. If you agree to pay by instalments make sure the amount of work completed reflects the amount being paid e.g. 50% payment of the fee should mean half of the work has been carried out.
Getting it in Writing

You should get detailed written quotations from at least three different tradespersons. The quotations should be based on the written specifications you provided. Set out the working arrangements in advance and agree the following:

- Start and completion dates, including penalties for late completion.
- The price is fixed and only to be increased if agreed with you in writing beforehand.
- When you will need to make yourself available to make any quick decisions. Provide your contact details if you are not going to be available at certain times.
- Who will be the main site supervisor and who you should complain to if necessary;
- that tradesmen will respect health and safety regulations and only use the materials specified in the quotation provided;
- Details of any permits or council authorisation needed to commence the project and who will apply for them.
- Agreement that the site will be left tidy throughout and at the end of the project.
- Whether the tradesperson will need access to water, toilets or electricity.
- Which areas of the site are not to be used for building works or storage (these can be marked off with tape).
- The name and address of the contractor’s insurer.
- A provision that the contractor will put right any defective work and pay for any damage to property.
- A provision that part of the fee may be withheld until work has been inspected and any defects put right.
- Names of any subcontractors and details about their payment.
- Payment details including the total cost for the job and how this will be paid.

PLEASE NOTE NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL DOES NOT RECOMMEND OR ENDORSE ANY TRADESPERSONS OR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Before the work starts

Access – You should make sure that anyone whose property will be accessed during the work is aware of this and they have given permission, for example a neighbouring flat in a shared block or the garden of an adjacent property.
Security – You or your neighbours may need to give tradesmen access to your home to carry out work. You should consider putting valuables in a locked room to which access is not required. When a scaffold is erected access to upper floors will become possible so please ensure your windows are locked. You should also advise your insurance company that scaffolding is being erected.

Do

• Ask for references, quality tradesperson or professionals will be happy to supply details of happy customers.
• Make sure that the tradesperson or professional is a member of a reputable trade association.
• Obtain quotations from at least 3 different contractors.
• Ask for a warranty or guarantee on the work and materials supplied and ensure you obtain any necessary certificates.
• Make sure you receive an invoice and a receipt for any work.

Don’t

• Trust companies when their literature does not contain an address.

• Employ anyone you do not trust.
• Pay cash upfront or before you are fully satisfied with the works.

Further Information

Local contractors are listed in directories including Yellow Pages www.yell.com and Thomson Local www.thomsonlocal.com. Alternatively, you can contact the following organisations, many of whom provide online search facilities to find local contractors:

• Care and Repair offer independent advice and assistance to help elderly and disabled homeowners repair, improve or adapt their homes so that they can live in comfort and safety in their own community. t: 0800 048 2882 www.northlan.care-and-repair.org
• The National Federation of Roofing Contractors provides an online directory of roofing contractors. t: 020 7638 7663 www.nfrc.co.uk
• Federation of Master Builders provides an online directory of building firms. t: 020 7025 2900 www.fmb.org.uk/welcome
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- **Window Advice Centre** provides impartial advice and can assist homeowners to obtain quotations.
  t: 0141 332 7878
  www.windowadvicecentre.co.uk

- **Scottish & Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers Federation (SNIPEF)** provides an online directory of licensed plumbers.
  t: 0131 556 0600
  www.needaplumber.org

- **Gas Safe Register** provides an online directory of Gas Safe registered engineers.
  t: 0800 408 5500
  www.gassaferegister.co.uk

- **SELECT** provides an online directory of electrical contractors in Scotland.
  t: 0131 445 5577
  www.select.org.uk/index.php

- **The Property Care Association (PCA)** provides an online directory of specialist contractors in the structural waterproofing, wood preservation, damp proofing and structural maintenance industries.
  t: 0844 375 4301
e: pca@property-care.org
  www.property-care.org

- **Home Energy Scotland** provides information on all Energy Efficiency measures including the Green Deal.
  t: 0808 808 2282
  www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/scotland

**Hiring an Architect, Surveyor or Engineer**

- **Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS)** provides an online directory of Architects in Scotland
  t: 0131 229 7545
  www.rias.org.uk

- **Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)** provides an online directory of Chartered Surveyors.
  t: 0131 225 7078
  www.rics.org

- **Find an Engineer** provides an online directory of Structural Engineers.
  t: 020 7235 4535
  www.findanengineer.com
Planning Permission and Building Warrants

- North Lanarkshire Council Regeneration and Environmental Services provide information and advice on planning including applying for planning permission.  
  **t:** 01236 632500  
  [www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk](http://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk)

- North Lanarkshire Council Building Standards Operations provide information and advice on building standards including applying for a building warrant.  
  **t:** 01698 812440  
  [www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk](http://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk)