

CO1: Consumer guide

Finding and engaging a professional installer

Finding and engaging a professional installer

Introduction

This guide is aimed at consumers who are considering a home improvement project, specifically the installation of a fitted kitchen, bedroom or bathroom.

This guide covers the following areas:

- What exactly is a professional installer?
- Essential credentials
- Where to find professional installers
- Pre-installation surveying
- What should an agreement include

Further information

More useful information can be found on the BiKBBI website – www.bikbbi.org.uk or by writing to:

The British Institute of Kitchen, Bedroom & Bathroom Installation
Thames Enterprise Centre
Princess Margaret Road
Essex
RM18 8RH

Telephone: 01375 213 199 (Option 6)
Email: comms@bikbbi.org.uk

Copyright

Material published by the British Institute of Kitchen, Bedroom & Bathroom Installation Limited within this guides is copyright The British Institute of Kitchen, Bedroom & Bathroom Installation Limited and may not be reproduced without permission.

Copyright exists in all other original material published on the internet by the British Institute of Kitchen, Bedroom & Bathroom Installation Limited.

© 2023 The British Institute of Kitchen, Bedroom & Bathroom Installation Limited, all rights reserved.

Finding and engaging a professional installer

When you embark on a home improvement project, there are a number of things to think about in order to make the process as stress-free as possible and to ensure that the end result meets your overall expectations.

The starting point: What exactly is a professional installer?

Installation is an incredibly important part of your home improvement project and often where the greatest risk is posed. The term 'rogue trader' is not a new one, yet there remains an unacceptably high number of cases annually whereby consumers become victims of unscrupulous rogues.

The good news is that there are many professional businesses and honest, hardworking tradespeople that have the skill, experience and professional integrity to deliver a great customer experience. The challenge, however, is how to find these businesses and engage in a successful commercial relationship.

Before you consider the task of finding a professional kitchen, bedroom or bathroom installer, it's worth understanding exactly what a professional installer is. This is often the part of the process that's forgotten as the focus tends to be on price and availability.

You'll be familiar with the term "you get what you pay for", and this becomes very relevant when it comes to the provision of service. The price you pay should not be associated to the specific task you're looking for, and the wider picture should be considered. As an example, the price often reflects experience, credentials and qualifications, insurance provision, tools used and the cost to deliver a robust, efficient and professional installation service.

Essential credentials

Whilst there is very little 'barrier to entry' for the kitchen, bedroom and bathroom installation sector, home improvement (particularly in the kitchen and bathroom) is governed by lots of regulation, legal requirements and governance. This includes health and safety, the handling of materials, water regulations, gas and electrical regulations, building regulations and local by-laws – as well as project and property specific requirement.

- All gas modification, installation and commissioning must be undertaken by a qualified and registered Gas Safe registered engineer (see: <https://www.gassaferegister.co.uk>).
- All electrical modification, installation and commissioning must be undertaken by a competent and compliant electrician (see: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/competent-person-scheme-current-schemes-and-how-schemes-are-authorised>)

In addition, installers must hold relevant public and employer's liability insurance provision to protect themselves and their customers – you.

It is your responsibility to check these credentials before work commences, to ask the right questions around 'who exactly will undertake the work' and ensure their credentials meet the legal requirements.

This is a task you can undertake yourself, or you could search for installers from respected sources.

Finding and engaging a professional installer

Where do you find professional installers?

Word of mouth is usually a great way to find professional installers, especially if it's from a trusted source, such as friends or family. Many tradespeople choose not to advertise or register with trade associations as they firmly rely on and have built great businesses based upon positive reputation and advocacy.

Regardless of how you find an installer, careful consideration must be applied when looking for a great installer. Do not rely solely on impressive looking advertisements or social media alone. As with most things in life, the devil is usually in the detail – or worst still, if there isn't detail at all.

Installation service purchased through the retailer:

Many retailers offer an installation service as part of their proposition, so it's worth exploring that option before going it alone. In fact, the British Institute of KBB Installation works with numerous retail installation standards partners, so find out if your chosen retailer works with us for real peace of mind.

Installers that work with retailers can be employed by the retailer, or if you're shopping with a larger national retailer, they usually work with sub-contracted independent installation businesses. Either way, the inclusion of installation within a retail led purchase does offer an additional layer of consumer protection, as ultimately, the retailer takes responsibility for the installation service provided. But, be sure about the services you're buying via the retailer as in some instances, it's the consumers responsibility to organise the preparatory or peripheral work, which is usually undertaken as part of a separate contract, not involving the retailer. This means that any additional work will not fall within the scope of works for the retailer and therefore they won't be held liable for anything that goes wrong with that element of your project.

Find a professional installer via your trade association:

The British Institute of KBB Installation (BiKBBi) is the UK's only government sanctioned institute dedicated to kitchen, bedroom and bathroom installation and as such, holds a register of installation businesses that meet and maintain business credentials in accordance with a strict and protective set of criteria. This is a great starting point for those people wanting to undertake the leg work when finding and appointing their own installer. To find out more, please visit the consumer section of the BiKBBi website – www.bikbbi.org.uk

A protected installation service:

For those that want a greater level of support and peace of mind, www.protectmyinstall.co.uk is a solid online service that connects consumers with local BiKBBi registered installers. In addition to connecting, the service includes a number of great features, including access to Trading Standards approved contracts, payment processing and protection, workmanship guarantees and inclusive dispute resolution.

Protect My Install provides protection in the same way that ATOL protection does when buying a holiday. If anything goes wrong, you won't lose your money!

Finding and engaging a professional installer

Pre-installation surveying

When you have found a professional installer, a pre-installation survey is essential. This will be conducted by your installer.

The pre-installation survey is a process involving the installer visiting your home to assess the scope of work, investigate and discuss any foreseeable challenges and to provide advice and guidance on the installation service.

The installer should take appropriate measurements, assess the extent of any preparatory work and provide a clear price for proposed work.

The outputs from a professional pre-installation survey should include:

- An itemised quote for planned work, including clear pricing, and
- A contract for service, detailing the formal agreement between you and them, including payment terms.

These documents form the basis of your legal agreement with the tradesperson and is the very foundation of your commercial relationship. All BiKBBI registered installation businesses have access to these documents, but it is a joint responsibility between the installer and consumer to ensure these foundations are laid before work commences.

Consider this: It is unlikely you would purchase a new car without fully understanding and agreeing the specifications - the colour, the interior, the number of wheels included and indeed the price. Yet, many home improvement projects are undertaken without this clarity in place and it's often where disputes arise.

What should your agreement include?

Many installations are undertaken without a formal, written agreement in place. The lack of such clarity can often be at the root of the cause of dispute.

A JCT contract is a standard, off the shelf agreement between buyer and seller (see: <https://www.jctltd.co.uk/>), however BiKBBI registered businesses have free access to more tailored contract templates.

A service contract should include a description of the services to be carried out, payment timeline, and any other important terms you agree upon, including cost.

Installation is complex and installers are not always able to provide an exact price. A contingency fund of around 10% of the contract value should be available in the event genuinely unforeseen items arise.