

Finding a competent contractor

Introduction

Putting energy efficiency measures in place might require you to work with a contractor. Finding a competent contractor will help you to achieve energy reduction safely and effectively.

What kind of contractor do you need?

- Building Management System (BMS) or Ventilation = **Mechanical Engineer**
- Renewables (Solar PV and Heat Pump) = **Renewable Energy Installer**
- Lighting = **Electrical Contractor**

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What is a competent contractor?

The term *competent contractor* refers to an individual or entity that can demonstrate sufficient qualifications, experience and knowledge and adhere to health and safety laws/regulations when carrying out the work you request. As a business owner, appointing a competent contractor is a legal obligation under the [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations \(1999\)](#).

In the UK, there is a difference between a competent person and a competent *contractor*, especially in the context of this guide. The UK Government's [competent person schemes](#) allows an individual or an enterprise to self-certify their work and declare it is within building regulations without getting approval from an independent body. Although this demonstrates competency such as trust and knowledge, this does not mean this contractor will meet other requirements associated with your type of work.

General check list for finding a competent contractor

- ask for testimonials that demonstrate relevant previous work.
- follow up on references.
- ensure the contractor understands the scope you have set out and can commit to this level of work, especially if they have other projects.
- agree a payment plan/method that you are comfortable with e.g. per milestone or based upon an agreed set of key performance indicators – do **not** pay upfront.
- seek two or three quotes for the service.
- if using a recruitment agency that has relevant adverts published, ensure they are trustworthy.
- check that the contractor complies with the relevant trade body.
- ensure they have a diversity and inclusion policy in place.
- obtain everything in writing and ensure you confirm and take note of all roles, responsibilities, the timeline, costs, and any other agreed points to generate a paper trail of evidence.
- make sure that you understand what guarantees and warranties are provided for the equipment your contractor is installing.
- get a copy of a [Risk Assessment and Method Statement](#) (RAMS) for completing the works.

- check the contractor's liability insurance, health and safety policy and accreditations e.g.

- [Acclaim Accreditation - Constructionline](#)

- [Health and Safety Contractor Accreditation | SafeContractor, Constructionline Accredited — Be Accredited, Health and Safety Consultants,SSIP Accreditations](#)

- [SSIP Accreditation | SMAS Worksafe \(smasltd.com\)](#)

- [Industries: Construction - CHAS](#)

- a competent contractor's website or documents will often contain the logos of certification schemes so look out for this and double check their membership status online.

Finding a Mechanical Engineer

Mechanical Engineers are typically needed for ventilation units and a BMS. A contractor working with ventilation units should be F-Gas certified and the most common certification schemes for this are REFCO, F-Gas Register or Bureau Veritas. Contractors are listed on [NICEIC database](#).

Work relating to a BMS requires a Building Automation Systems Technician. Where the BMS incorporates a fire protection system, the chosen contractor must be certified by BAFE and included on their [fire safety register](#).

Finding a Renewable Energy Installer (Solar PV and Heat Pumps)

Select an installer and products that are certified by the *Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS)*. This will provide you with the confidence that the project and service will meet industry standards and is more likely to deliver the intended benefits. www.mcscertified.com/find-an-installer/.

MSC certified installers **must** be registered with a consumer protection scheme such as the [Renewable Energy Consumer Code \(RECC\)](#) or the [Home Insulation & Energy Systems Contractors Scheme \(HIES\)](#)

Additionally for existing gas heating, any contractor working with gas must be registered with the [Gas Safety Register](#). This is the official list of gas safe registered businesses and has replaced CORGI registration.

Don't cut corners – only use a gas safe registered engineer.



Finding an Electrical Contractor

All competent contractors should be registered with an accreditation scheme, such as the [National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting \(NICEIC\)](#).

This is one of several organisations that assesses the competence of businesses undertaking works across the building services sectors in the UK. This demonstrates that they have public liability insurance and comply with the most up to date version of the British Standard (BS76171) regulations on electrical installations.

The services offered by NICEIC also extend to heating and gas engineers and renewable energy installers.

For emergency lighting or any fire safety installations, the contractor must be certified by *British Approvals for Fire Equipment (BAFE)* and listed on their [Fire Safety Register](#).

N.B. This guidance provides an overview of what to look for in a competent contractor with overarching best practice and where to begin. Please do refer to the specific guidance for each contractor trade body.

Further guides can be found [here](#)