An illustration of a brick wall with a person on the right side, seen from the back, wearing a blue shirt and dark trousers. The person is holding a hammer and is in the process of breaking a brick. The background is a pattern of red bricks with black mortar lines. The text is overlaid on the wall.

DEALING WITH A ROGUE BUILDER GUIDE

If you're about to have building work, renovations or repairs done on your home, use this guide to protect yourself from builder fraud and ensure the project goes to plan.

www.tssw.org.uk/consumers/building-fraud

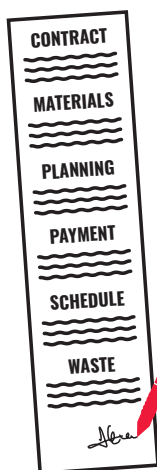
DEALING WITH A ROGUE BUILDER GUIDE

For advice and guidance on finding a genuine and trustworthy builder, please see our "Finding a Builder Checklist", which is available to download from the Trading Standards South West website.



Before work starts

Ask your builder for a contract before any building work begins, or you pay the builder any money. **The contract should include:**



A detailed specification of the work, including who will pay for materials and what materials will be used. If this isn't included in the contract, cheaper materials could be substituted.

Who's responsible for applying for planning permission and building control approval if required.

A clear payment schedule – make sure you're not expected to pay for work before it's carried out or for materials before they're delivered.

The start and finish dates and what happens if there is a delay.

Who's responsible for tidying up and paying for waste disposal such as skips.

What happens in the event of a dispute.

Arrange to make electronic fee transfers rather than pay in cash so that you can evidence payments if there's a dispute.



Keep copies of any correspondence between you and your builder leading up to and during the work. Emails and text messages all act as evidence should there be a dispute.

Ensure any required planning permission has been granted and building control has been notified of the works if necessary.



Warning signs

Once work has begun, several warning signs could indicate that the builder is a rogue trader. These include:



Asking to be paid in cash or pushing for advance payments.



Threatening that the workers won't work if they're not paid.



Requesting additional payments for increased material costs.



Substituting cheaper materials than were specified in your contract.



Cutting corners with the work.



Making dubious excuses for delays in progress.



Constantly disappearing, being evasive or not taking calls from you.



Failing to turn up when expected, not doing a full day's work or leaving the site for long unexplained breaks.



Not leaving the site safe or tidy between work. For example, placing cardboard to cover a hole or leaving tools and materials scattered around.



Not wearing clothing appropriate for the job, such as hard hats, high-vis jackets or steel-capped boots.



Using sub-standard equipment such as broken ladders or run-down vehicles.

If things are going wrong

If you have any concerns or problems with the building work, raise these with your builder.

Try to keep things cordial and offer them the opportunity to remedy the problem.

Make it clear what you want them to do and when to resolve the issue.

Back up any verbal discussions with a confirmation email.



Take pictures of the building work as evidence in case you end up taking your builder to court.



Don't be pressured into making more payments for fear that the builder will leave the job unfinished. Instead, only make staged payments as work is completed satisfactorily.

Next steps

If you're unable to resolve the matter with your builder or your builder disappears out of sight:



Don't pay any more money to the builder.



If you think you're the victim of fraud, contact the police via the non-emergency number '101'.



Contact the Citizens Advice consumer service for free advice or to report a rogue builder.



Gather your evidence such as your contract, communications with the builder, invoices, receipts and photos to use in a claim against the builder.

For more information and advice, including helpful website links, visit

[www.tssw.org.uk/
consumers/building-fraud](http://www.tssw.org.uk/consumers/building-fraud)

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

For support, reporting and guidance, the following organisations can help:

Trading Standards
South West

www.tssw.org.uk/consumers

The Citizens Advice
consumer service

0808 223 1133

www.adviceguide.org.uk

Police: Non-emergency

Dial 101



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