



Consumer tips:

What to consider when using trader recommendation sites

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If you're planning home improvements, maintenance, or repairs, a trader recommendation site can help you find suitable professionals. While these sites can connect you with a variety of traders, it's important to understand how each site operates and what checks they perform to help ensure that traders will meet your expectations.

This document sets out practical tips you should follow before you choose a trader recommendation site to find a trader, including what information you should look for and compare (eg information on how the trader recommendation site vets and monitors traders, its complaints and sanction processes and its approach to online consumer reviews).

These tips aim to help you to choose a trader recommendation site that safely connects you to a trustworthy trader, protects you against rogue traders and assists you when things go wrong.

1. Don't rely solely on claims of 'trustworthiness' from the trader recommendation site

Many use terms like 'trusted', 'reliable', or 'expert' to describe their listed traders. However, it's important to check exactly what the site does to verify these claims. There should be clear information on their website, but if you have any further questions contact the trader recommendation site to ask about their vetting process.

2. Choose a trader recommendation site that verifies trader details

Some sites may only rely on traders' self-reported information. To protect yourself, look for a site that goes beyond self-assessment and has an effective vetting process which involves things like:

- Verifying the trader's identity, experience, and qualifications
- Ensuring the trader has the necessary licenses, insurance, and certifications for tasks such as electrical work or gas installation
- Providing information about how frequently they check traders' credentials and qualifications (for example, annually or when concerns arise)

If available, check any information on the site about how many traders fail these checks or are refused membership.

3. Make sure the trader recommendation site has a strong complaints process

Before choosing a site to use, make sure it has a complaints procedure which appears to be easy to use. Look for details about how complaints are handled, including whether the process is straightforward and whether the trader recommendation site commits to a timely response to complaints.

Check if the site offers support in resolving disputes or provides alternative dispute resolution services if issues do arise with a trader.

4. Understand how the trader recommendation site monitors traders and sanctions poor performance

A site should continuously monitor the performance of listed traders. Look for sites that:

- Have systems in place to identify traders with poor performance, such as regular reviews of customer feedback or alerts for repeated complaints

- Act promptly when issues arise, including suspending or removing traders who fall short of required standards

If available, check any information on the site about how many traders were suspended or removed due to poor performance or misconduct.

5. Be cautious about online reviews

If the trader recommendation site includes customer reviews, check what steps they take to make sure reviews are genuine. This could include checking to see if reviews are flagged as being from a verified customer or whether the site verifies reviews and has processes to remove fake or misleading feedback.

6. Compare traders before deciding

Don't rush into selecting a trader based on the first recommendation you find. Review and compare several options, pay attention to important details like experience, qualifications, certifications and verified customer reviews. You can also cross-check information on other sites, such as trade associations or independent review platforms, to ensure you're making an informed decision.

Know your consumer rights:

Remember you have important legal rights and should be treated fairly. For example, a trader must act with reasonable care and skill when carrying out building or home improvement work.

You also have cancellation rights depending on the circumstances in which you agreed a contract. For example, if you sign a contract in your home or online you can cancel for any reason, up to 14 days before the work begins.

Sources of advice on your rights under consumer protection law:

- If you need help with a problem you have experienced with a trader, you can contact the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on 0808 223 1133 (or contact 0808 223 1144 to speak with a Welsh speaking adviser).
- A trained adviser can give you advice over the phone and, if necessary, share information about your complaint with Trading Standards. You can also get help with a trader issue via the Citizens Advice consumer service online form.
- In Scotland, you can contact Advice Direct Scotland on 0808 164 6000.
- In Northern Ireland, you can contact Consumerline on 0300 123 6262.

Other sources of relevant consumer advice:

- Citizens Advice has published [advice](#) on how to find a trader and check you can trust them.