



## HOME SERVICES DIRECTORY

### Terms and Conditions



#### 1. Aims and Objectives

- 1.1 It is often difficult for customers, especially those who are vulnerable, to know if they are dealing with reputable traders, who operate in a fair and honest way and who offer high standards of workmanship.
- 1.2 To try to tackle such problems North Lincolnshire Council Trading Standards has introduced the **Home Services Directory**.
- 1.3 As members of the Home Services Directory, traders must consider the scheme's purpose in terms of providing protection for North Lincolnshire consumers, particularly the older and more vulnerable members of society.
- 1.4 Members of the scheme must sign an undertaking to trade fairly and agree to adopt certain working practices. The aim is to ensure a level of service which both reflects good practice and satisfies customers, whilst promoting standards which traders also regard as reasonable.

#### 2 Assessment Procedure

- 2.1 There are various categories of work in which traders can apply for membership
  - 2.1.1 Builder
  - 2.1.2 Carpet fitter
  - 2.1.3 Drainage
  - 2.1.4 Driveways
  - 2.1.5 Electrician
  - 2.1.6 Gardener
  - 2.1.7 Glazing
  - 2.1.8 Handy person
  - 2.1.9 Joiner
  - 2.1.10 Mobile hairdresser
  - 2.1.11 Painter/decorator
  - 2.1.12 Plumber
  - 2.1.13 Roofer
  - 2.1.14 Security installer
  - 2.1.15 Other trades will be considered on request.
- 2.2 Applicants must undergo the following vetting process:
  - 2.2.1 Police check for you and employees, where applicable (checked through Humberside Police)
  - 2.2.2 County Court Judgement check (checked through the Registry Trust)
  - 2.2.3 Trading Standards check for any customer complaints
  - 2.2.4 References
  - 2.2.5 Proof that applicants have appropriate public liability insurance
  - 2.2.6 Company stationery will be checked for compliance with legislation

- 2.2.7 Business must have been established for a minimum of 6 months
- 2.3 The following criteria will also be taken into account:
  - 2.3.1 Relevant qualifications
  - 2.3.2 Membership of trade associations
  - 2.3.3 Experience in trade
- 2.4 Traders will be excluded from the scheme if:
  - 2.4.1 the Police check reveals any relevant cautions or convictions
  - 2.4.2 the applicant is found to have a relevant County Court Judgement recorded against them
  - 2.4.3 Trading Standards has a complaint history about the applicant which is incompatible with membership
  - 2.4.4 The applicant has falsely claimed membership of a trade association or is dishonestly claiming to have qualifications
- 2.5 Trading Standards will have the final decision on membership taking into account all of the above checks.
- 2.6 Traders accepted into the scheme will receive a letter of acceptance and can use the membership logo in accordance with the use of logo guidelines (Section 6).
- 2.7 Membership is conditional upon acceptance of, and adherence to, the terms and conditions of the scheme and the payment of a membership fee.
- 2.8 Membership will be revoked for contravening the terms and conditions. The membership fee is not refundable in these circumstances.
- 2.9 Applicants refused entry into the scheme will not be charged and any payment made to Trading Standards will be returned within 14 days of the refusal.
- 2.10 If membership is revoked after joining the scheme, the fee paid is non refundable.
- 2.11 Reasons for refusal or revocation of membership will be given in writing.
- 2.12 Any appeal against the decision must be made to the Trading Standards Manager within 14 days of the decision to refuse or revoke membership.
- 2.13 Any appeals will be heard by an independent appeals committee.
- 2.14 Membership will be renewed annually.
- 2.15 Members will pay a renewal fee.
- 2.16 Members agree to undergo the full vetting procedure every three years.
- 2.17 Members are obliged to inform Trading Standards within seven days if they acquire any criminal convictions or county court judgements that may affect the suitability of membership.

- 2.18 This is an introductory service only. **All contracts entered into as a result of the scheme are strictly between the trader and the customer** – North Lincolnshire Council Trading Standards Service has no contractual liability.

### **3 Membership of the scheme shows that the trader:**

- 3.1 is committed to trade fairly and respects confidentiality
- 3.2 offers competent standards of workmanship
- 3.3 is reliable and deals courteously with customers
- 3.4 is aware of the current laws and regulations which apply to their work, and agrees to comply with these in both the spirit and the letter
- 3.5 adopts safe systems of work and complies with current Health and Safety legislation
- 3.6 will give out a customer feedback questionnaire whenever work is carried out for a customers
- 3.7 agrees to the dispute resolution procedure in the event of a dispute (section 5)

### **4 Trader Commitment**

- 4.1 Members agree to the following:
  - 4.1.1 to only undertake work which they are competently able to complete and to immediately declare any problems encountered
  - 4.1.2 to notify customers in advance where a call out charge will be made
  - 4.1.3 to quote prices which are VAT inclusive where appropriate
  - 4.1.4 to give written estimates or quotations (an estimate is a considered approximation of the likely cost involved whereas a quotation constitutes a firm price for which the work will be done)
  - 4.1.5 to show the name and address of their business on all business stationery
  - 4.1.6 to provide itemised bills
  - 4.1.7 to make only true representations about the products and services and the need for them
  - 4.1.8 to supply all goods and services contracted for within a reasonable time
  - 4.1.9 to treat customers' property with care and respect
  - 4.1.10 to produce all documents in plain English
  - 4.1.11 NOT to attempt to exclude liability for loss or damage
  - 4.1.12 to deal with all complaints promptly and fairly and to use the dispute resolution procedure in the event of a dispute (section 5)
  - 4.1.13 NOT to seek customers by cold calling door to door

## **5 Dispute Resolution Procedure**

- 5.1 If a customer is unhappy with work carried out by a member of the Home Services Directory, the trader agrees to follow this dispute resolution procedure. It is administered by Trading Standards and is designed to offer a simple method of resolving disputes.
- 5.2 Trading Standards will act as an impartial third party and, having examined all the facts, will recommend actions to resolve the dispute. Nothing in this scheme shall preclude either party from seeking redress through legal action in the Civil Courts.
- 5.2.1 Stage 1 – Customers should try to resolve the complaint directly with the trader.
- 5.2.2 Stage 2 – If the complaint remains unresolved, the consumer may contact Consumer Direct on 08454 040506 for further free advice. The trader may contact the Trading Standards Business advice line on 01724 297664 for further free advice.
- 5.2.3 Stage 3 – If the matter is still not resolved, the Trading Standards will investigate the complaint and, where necessary, provide a recommendation to resolve the dispute. This recommendation is binding on the member. Where it is considered necessary to consult an independent expert, agreement will be sought from both parties about the payment of such consultation.

## **6 Use of the logo**

- 6.1 Traders are permitted to use the Home Services Directory logo on business documents and promotional advertising material including the Yellow Pages.
- 6.2 Should members wish to advertise their membership of the directory there must be no reference to the term “approved” or similar. Members may use the statement “Vetted by Trading Standards”
- 6.3 If a member leaves the scheme or membership is revoked use of the logo will cease immediately and all advertising and business documentation will be modified within 14 days of the date membership ended. Continued use or misuse of the logo may constitute an offence and Trading Standards will consider formal enforcement action on such occasions.