

5 - Before work starts on grant schemes

If you'd like to apply for a grant scheme for energy improvements you will nearly always have a survey of your home, followed by some sort of planning (design) in more detail. **After this it's time for the works to start.**

This stage will involve at least some disruption, and builders or other tradespeople will need to enter your home.

Some small improvements can be finished in a day or less. Other improvements (like external wall insulation) will take longer.

It's important to stress that standards and accreditations are no guarantee that you'll get good quality.

This is why we encourage you to learn more about the different stages you'll pass through on your way to a cosier, more affordable home.

A good first step is feeling more confident about what to look for, and what to ask.

Applying for grants?

See our other sheets on:

- 1 - An introduction to home improvement grants
- 2 - An introduction to Retrofit Standards
- 3 - Surveys and assessments
- 4 - Getting into the detail (design)
- 6 - When work is finished
- 7 - Mixing grant schemes with other funding

Before building work starts

Questions to ask

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Who will be doing the work?

Where is the company based?

How many different trades will be needed?

Will you be using sub-contractors? If so, who are they?

Sub-contractors are other companies or sole traders who are given a job by a lead contractor (builder). This is a common arrangement, but it helps to know in advance if a different company turns up out the blue!

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How long will the work take?

Can you talk me through what will happen on each day or week?

Delays happen, but knowing roughly how long things are expected to take is helpful.

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Will I be without heating, hot water, mains water or electricity during the work?
If so, how long for?

Let the company know if this will pose a problem for you. For example, if you rely on electricity for medical equipment.

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What do I need to do to prepare for the works?

Are there parts of my home that need to be cleared before works take place?

Knowing this in advance can give you time to prepare, and seek help from friends, family or other organisations.

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Do you offer any support to help me prepare for the work?

Or can you put me in contact with an organisation that can help?

Some companies employ people called Resident Liaison Officers, or Tenant Liaison Officers.

Depending on where you live or your personal circumstances, there may be other organisations that can help. For example, charities for older people, mental health and housing. This might be especially helpful if you have a lot of belongings that you need help clearing.

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Will the work impact on any shared or communal arrangements with my neighbours? If so, will you help us with this?

For example, putting up scaffolding might need a temporary change to shared bin collection points.

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Will the work come with any product (manufacturer) and installation guarantees or warranties?

If you are having work funded via public grant schemes you must be given a 25 year TrustMark approved appropriate guarantee for: External Wall Insulation, Internal Wall Insulation, Cavity Wall Insulation, Park Home Insulation, Room-in-Roof Insulation, Under Floor Insulation. Other work (like loft insulation, heating controls, draught proofing, renewable systems) must have at least a 2 year financial protection that meets TrustMark requirements.

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(If you own your home) Do I need to let my insurer or mortgage company know about this work?

It's good practice to check with your own insurance and mortgage company yourself as policies will vary.

**Will the work require scaffolding or skips?**

If so, how long will these be needed for?

**Where will you store materials and tools?**

It's important that things like insulation are kept dry.

**What sort of quality checks will you make during building work? Who will do these?**

Sometimes schemes will use:

- *A Retrofit Coordinator - this person may be part of the same company, but their role requires them to protect your interests (and your landlord, if applicable).*
- *A Clerk of Works - these are sometimes employed to check the quality of works.*
- *A Building Control Officer - if the work is required to meet Building Regulations.*

**Who will sign off the work to say it's finished?**

Will they actually visit my home?

From spring 2025 the PAS2035 standard will require more visits. While photos can be useful too, site visits are important.

**Who can I contact for updates, questions or concerns?**

It's important that you know who you can contact if there are any problems. The people working on your home may not be the ones who know the detail or make decisions.

Some companies employ people called Resident Liaison Officers, or Tenant Liaison Officers. If you're a tenant, you may be asked to raise issues with your landlord directly.