

The Consumers Inside Guide to Hiring A Domestic Cleaner

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Courtesy of Home Fresh

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Home Fresh Mission Statement

“ To provide Local, Reliable and Affordable cleaner’s & housekeeper’s to the Elderly, working families and busy professional’s within our local communities and supply a complete back up and support service that guarantees 100% satisfaction! ”

Who is Home Fresh>

James McCullen began the Home Fresh Cleaning Agency concept in Rural Cambridgeshire. James spent years developing and refining the business to bring Home Fresh up to the high level of customer satisfaction the public demanded.

In 2006 Home Fresh was asked to assist 'Talkback Productions' in their television show "How Clean is Your House" whilst they were filming in the Peterborough area. A grime ridden property was transformed by the Home Fresh team.

It became apparent that there were many more members of the public up and down the country that were also in need of local, reliable and affordable cleaners. And so the Home Fresh franchise was born.

In May 2008 James decided to grant license's (*franchises*) to individual entrepreneurs throughout the country so they could provide the very same service to their local community and maintain the personal service that James's local clients have come accustomed to, *a local, reliable and affordable cleaning service, that provides back and support to its clients when needed!*

Your local Home Fresh Watford/ Herts agency is independently owned and run by local Businessman Stephen Hodson. Stephen welcomes any questions you may have so why not give him a call now on 0800 027 4573

The Consumers Inside Guide to Hiring A Domestic Cleaner

Dear friend

Choosing a domestic cleaning service for your home isn't easy! Why? Because you're bombarded with misleading advertising, confusing claims and simply bad information. From different pricing brackets, different trading styles, high-pressure sales to unqualified rogues with no ethics - how do you ever find an honest, reliable domestic cleaner?

You start by reading this "**Consumer's Inside Guide to Hiring & Domestic Cleaner**". In this fact-filled e-book, you'll discover tricks and scams commonly used by cleaning companies followed by ten questions you must ask any prospective cleaning business before inviting them round to your home, and four steps to follow for guaranteed success in finding your cleaner!

I wrote this e-book after my experience of being in the cleaning industry for 7 years, hearing of consumers being ripped off and also knowing certain high profile companies pulling the wool over the general public's eyes. My aim is to help you better understand how the domestic cleaning business operates.

Now with this information, you can make an informed, intelligent decision. And if you have any questions about domestic cleaning, you're invited to call me on my free-phone number **0800 183 02 02**.

I've dedicated my business to educating consumers so therefore I am happy to help you in every way.

James McCullen
Proprietor
Home Fresh

PS, When you do find yourself a quality cleaner, treat them with the respect they deserve. Reliable, honest and trustworthy cleaners are a rare find.

There Are 3 Types of Cleaners

- The Independent Cleaner
- The Cleaning Team
- The Cleaning Agency cleaner

The Independent Lady:

There are two ways of finding the independent cleaning lady; first and foremost your priority should be to ask friends or family if they know of anybody. A referral is usually the best method of recruitment. If you have no luck here then ask the local butcher, florist, baker etc, many times small business's have wide networks that are far reaching so you may well get lucky.

Secondly you can sometimes find the local cleaning lady advertising for clients in the newsagent's window, or if there is no-one advertising themselves, you could place your own advert in the window. *(Cleaner's Prices can vary from approximately £5.75 ph - £15 ph in the Hertfordshire area.)*

If you are going to go down this road, then proceed with extreme caution, unless you really know what you're doing, you could leave yourself wide open to a multitude of problems, lets have a closer look.

The downside to using an independent lady is the following

First of all you will have to interview her, if you don't like her you will have to find another source for finding a cleaner. However let's presume that you get on well in your first meeting. The next thing you need to do is to check her references, these can take a week or two or more to come back *(if they come back at all)*. If the references come back ok, then you may have found yourself a little gem.

The next issue you have to concern yourself with is your ethics of what you are doing. Are the wages you are paying her being taxed? Are you paying her national insurance? What about sick pay? Unless your "up to speed" on all this

legislation, it can get very complicated, however if this is your forte, then this method of recruiting may well suit you. The only other issue you have is with insurance! You will need an adequate policy in place

But it doesn't stop there

If you have been lucky, she has been good and thorough and your family have taken to her. Now the problem is you have become emotionally involved. How would you explain to her if her standards suddenly dropped? You have made a rod for your own back.

By utilizing the services of a company, they take care of everything

From Interviewing, training or re-training. With a company you will always have the back up when you need it. So really what we have gone through here is a complicated process, when really the idea of employing a cleaner is to free up time and make your lifestyle more streamlined, the idea of "going it alone" isn't always what you thought it was, which is why many people turn to using a company.

The cleaning team

You will find most cleaning companies in the yellow pages or the Thompson directory. Look under domestic cleaning, and find a business that will serve your requirements. Many cleaning companies operate in teams of 2, 3, 4 or more to clean a house; this enables them to service many houses in a day. There is not a shortage of teams of cleaners, so you should be ok here.

There will be no administration headaches for you as the cleaners will be directly employed by the company. Many teams of cleaners have come about because many ladies think that starting a cleaning business is a great opportunity to pursue, after all "*where there's muck there's money*" and they wrongly think its all low overheads and hardly any financial outlay.

In the cold light of day running a cleaning business (*or any business come to that*) is so further from the truth of lots of money, easy & fun. Client scheduling, answering telephones, accounting & book-keeping procedures, on going marketing, staffing issues, taxation, payroll etc are all day to day chores and these tasks are why a lot of Start up businesses have a very high failure rate in

this country with as many as 1 in 2 failing in their first two years. (*source: thetimes100.co.uk*)

The other downside to the way they can operate is the following

Their cleaning procedures could be compared to a swirling tornado, rushing through as quickly as they dare to get onto the next job, they may well do a good job, but *are they counting money or time?* You bet there counting money, the quicker they go, the more they earn and because they are working at such a fast pace many cleaners will not put up with such poor working conditions.

Therefore you end up having complete strangers in your home

Week in week out you may have different cleaners in your home because of this high turnover of staff. Ask yourself are you comfortable with this?

However, it is not all doom and gloom for the cleaning teams. Occasionally they do manage to carve themselves a niche in the market, and you will find a team of cleaners that will work to a high standard every time consistently and will have all the correct answers to your questions, again though, finding them is a needle in a hay stack.

Carry out your due diligence and you may get lucky. On most occasions, the cleaning teams usually price by the job in hand, not by an hourly rate. This can be anywhere from £35 - £75 or more for a weekly clean in a typical family home.

The Cleaning Agency cleaner

Often dismissed and under utilized are the services of a cleaning agency. The benefits to you are countless, but mainly by using an agency you are avoiding all of the hassles involved in the recruitment process, thus eliminating all the unreliable un-referenced cleaners.

When using a cleaner from an agency, you will be allocated the same person every week so they become familiar with the way you like your chores done, so none of the usual teams of cleaners whizzing around your home. Pricing is based on the hour and in Watford/ Herts area the going rate is about £10.00 ph (*inclusive*) for a minimum of 2hours. Included in this fee is a nominal monthly retainer fee paid separately to the agency for the ongoing administration tasks.

- Thorough Vetting Procedures (although they vary from agency to agency)
- Worker legislation is all taken care of by the agency.
- It is the agencies job to provide temporary relief for cleaners who are off sick or on holiday if required.
- Cleaners are provided with identification badges and uniform
- Insurance is provided.
- Regular evaluations carried out by the agency to monitor results of the cleaner allocated to you.
- Very competitive prices.
- Local office for customer support & Queries 9 till 5 Monday to Friday

So your probably thinking, well this is the answer I have been looking for, I'll just hire any old agency and away I go"wrong, be warned!

The Business that is "Pretending" to be local

Did you know that some businesses may appear local but are in fact from another town! And our area is rife with 'out of town' business's operating locally and appearing to the consumer as if they are local!

Why do they do this? Because they know that you would not use their services if you really knew their exact location of business!

Let's have a look at how they pull the wool over your eyes. Certain giveaways to out of town businesses pretending to be local can be:

- Advetising literature without the local area code
- Most out of town companies utilise an 0845 number charged at local rates (*which is dearer than you probably think*)
- Or a 0870 number. These 0870 numbers charge you at the national rate, the Business then receives a revenue share of the cost of your call, (*cheeky beggars*), *they really are taking advantage of you!*

They use these numbers to make themselves look bigger and /or more trustworthy, but in reality it's acting as an "over coat" on their exact location as well as a money making revenue generator every time someone calls them.

Any business that is genuine will offer a totally free phone call for you, will also offer a landline with a local area code on it and a mobile number.

Training of Cleaners

Sometimes all the training/guidance cleaners receive is a small A5 sheet of paper. This is not enough in this day and age, with the ever increasing list of chemicals on the market and with evolving materials currently available in modern day homes, specialised knowledge of chemical balance and surface materials is paramount! Asking how a company trains their cleaners is essentially the most important question you can ask any prospective cleaning company

4 mistakes to avoid At all costs!

MISTAKE 1: Choosing a company who doesn't offer a money back guarantee. In my view every company should be fully accountable for its work. And if you aren't pleased with the job in every way, you shouldn't have to pay for it. Not all companies offer a guarantee. Ask the company if they offer a money back guarantee and then make sure you have it in writing.

MISTAKE 2: Choosing a company who doesn't adhere to the rules set out by the British Institute of Cleaning Science. BICSc is a trade association for the cleaning industry who are dedicated to:

- (1) Honest, ethical business practices
- (2) Staying current on the latest methods of cleaning practises
- (3) Offer the highest possible level of customer service
- (4) A code of conduct to adhere to

You're making a wise decision when you choose a company who uses their guidelines for cleaner training purposes.

MISTAKE 3: You need a company that is going to suit your needs, not the company's needs. Flexibility is the key to any successful client / cleaner relationship, so make sure you insist on flexibility, let's face it you may just want the kitchen cupboards cleaning one week, all the skirting boards the next or even some ironing taken care of. Think about how you want your house cleaned before you call anyone.

MISTAKE 4: Choosing a company without getting comments from their existing clients. Any company can say anything about their past jobs. And, sadly, some of what some companies say may not be true. Make sure you ask for references or read comments from current customers so you can depend on their company and their work.

4 Steps to Hiring a Reliable, Honest and Trustworthy Cleaner

STEP 1: Make a commitment to yourself to hiring a cleaner by the end of the month. The longer you keep putting it off, the more time you're wasting when you could be spending it on something more productive. When you hire in a cleaner, you are making an effective lifestyle decision which will in-turn pay you back 10 fold in quality time, *now that's precious!*

STEP 2: Use local services, with good management skills, look for a company that has had cleaners working for them for a decent length of time, look for guarantees on service, and ask to meet a representative from the company, go with your gut instincts.

STEP 3: Ask questions. The way you learn about a company is to ask specific questions and listen carefully to the answers. Here are ten tough questions to ask any cleaning company before they even enter your home:

10 tough questions you can ask

- 1 **Can you produce your up to date accreditations and insurance policy.**
- 2 **What trade organisation's are you a member of?**
- 3 **Can you prove you are a member?**
- 4 **What training do you provide your cleaners?**
- 5 **Can you provide references?**
- 6 **What's your business addresses?**
- 7 **How long have you been trading?**
- 8 **What is your cleaner vetting procedure?**
- 9 **Do you tailor the cleaning to what I want or do you have set templates to follow?**
- 10 **Will you undertake ironing too? Change bed sheets? Wash inside windows?**

STEP 4:

Once you're satisfied that you're working with an honest, competent professional, if you need guidance to assess the time needed to clean your home ask for a home visit. And ask for a written quotation if a company is quoting on the job in hand rather than an hourly rate this gives you the assurance that you know exactly what your job will cost - no surprises.

By following these four steps, you'll gain all the information you need to make an informed, intelligent decision.

So there you go, I like to think I have given you a balanced view and you are now fully educated on how the domestic cleaning business operates and you should now be able to make an informed choice on which cleaning service provider you will choose. The last ten questions are the surest way of making any rogue company do an about turn and scarper!

Home Fresh is one of the most competitive in the Watford / Herts region, with prices for a regular weekly cleaner being only £10 per hour inclusive.

We have many satisfied clients, and some of their testimonials are available on the website for you to view. Should you have any further questions you need to ask or if you would like to find out more about hiring one of our cleaners then please contact Stephen Hodson direct: 0208 386 5897 or text "I'd like a cleaner" to 07974 518 949 and Stephen will call you back. Alternatively you can email info@home-fresh.co.uk

kindest Regards

James McCullen

Telephone Reminder / Prompt Sheet

Verify Address:- Google Yellow Pages: Tel Operator

Their telephone No:- _____

0800 Local Number 0845 0870

Trading Style of Business:- Sole Trader Partnership Ltd Company

Proprietors/Partners/Directors Name:-

If Ltd company, verify trading details on www.companieshouse.co.uk Done

Do you operate as an agency and screen the cleaners before they are sent to me?

Do you operate in teams of two or more cleaners?

Do you do the cleaning yourself?

Do you charge by the hour or by the job in hand?

Do you have an information pack you can send me? Yes No

(By the company sending an information pack, they will no doubt send a covering letter with it, by law they must put their trading address on their stationery).

What trade organisations are you a member of?

How long have you been trading? _____

If the company you are talking to refuses to answer any of the above questions, do not enter into any contract or agreement.

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Watford Trading Standards:

<http://www.hertsdirect.org/yourbus/tradingstandards/>

Hertfordshire Police non emergency- 0845 3300 222

Business Name:- _____

Business Address:-

Postcode:- _____

NOTES

Eco Friendly / organic products for you and your family

www.spiritofnature.co.uk

www.greenpeople.co.uk