

Your FREE Report:

The
Consumer's Guide
to
Domestic Cleaning

- How to avoid the **five** most common Domestic Cleaning problems
- **Six** mistakes to avoid when choosing a cleaning company
- **Four** costly misconceptions about the domestic cleaning industry
- The **seven** dangers of allowing the wrong person to clean your home

This is a consumer education service provided by
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Dear Consumer,

This report has been compiled as an educational service to help consumers to shop for services in the fast-growing Domestic Cleaning industry.

If you are reading this report, the likelihood is that you are contemplating or have even made the decision to have your home cleaned by someone other than yourself!

For many people, this really is 'life-changing' decision. The benefits of not having to clean your own home any longer are far reaching. The time benefit alone changes your life!

However, allowing someone into our homes (and for most of us, our homes are our biggest asset) is a step that should not be taken lightly.

We hope that this FREE guide will be of some assistance to you.

Managing Director



THURROCK
BUSINESS AWARDS **2005**
Winner

THURROCK
BUSINESS AWARDS **2006**
Winner

How to avoid the five most common domestic cleaning problems:

1. Poor Standards

This really is the 'Number 1' rip-off. So many promises get made and yet there are few companies who actually deliver on this one. If the standards are not right, it doesn't matter how much you pay, it's a waste of money! Look for a company that can provide you with lots of **testimonials**. If they provide a great service to others, the likelihood is that they will do the same for you!

2. Management Fees

Some organisations quote unbelievably low hourly rates just to hook you in. What they don't tell you is that as well as paying cash to the cleaner, you also have to pay an exorbitant monthly '*Management Fee*'. Watch out!

3. Poor Management

Some companies are happy to take your money but provide a poor or even non-existent after-sales service. When you employ a company, it shouldn't be *your* job to manage their cleaner. If you are going to employ someone yourself, you had better be familiar with UK employment law. Could you defend an Employment Tribunal Application from a disgruntled former cleaner? Don't get caught out!

4. Contracts

You could sign up to a service that suddenly deteriorates after the first few visits. A company that is confident regarding its work standards wouldn't force you to sign up for a long-term contract.

5. Paying for Cleaning that doesn't Happen

Some companies expect you to pay for cleaning visits even when you are on holiday and your home has been untouched since the last visit! Check that you are able to suspend cover where required.

Six mistakes to avoid when choosing a cleaning company:

1. Employing an Individual Privately

This option has so many risks associated with it! Before contemplating this option, please ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I able to deal with attendance, performance, conduct and timekeeping issues if required?
- Does my cleaner have any criminal convictions?
- Am I willing to carry out my own cleaning in my cleaner's absence during holiday, sickness and family problems?
- Do I have insurance in place for Employer's Liability risks?
- If not, would I be able to cover a claim for Personal Injury following an accident in my home?
- If I decided to part-company with my cleaner, could I successfully defend a Tribunal Claim for unfair dismissal if required?

- If I was unsuccessful, would I be able to afford the Tribunal Award? (current maximum = £50,000)
- Have I carried out Health & Safety Risk Assessments and Fire Risk Assessments in my home?
- What happens if my cleaner breaks something?

2. Missing or inappropriate Insurance Cover

In today's '*compensation culture*', liability insurance has become **very** expensive with many companies choosing to operate without this *essential* insurance cover. Ask for a copy of the insurance schedule - no bona fide company will object.

Look for the following as *minimum* levels of cover:

| <u>Type of Cover</u> | <u>Sum Insured</u> |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Employers Liability | £5,000,000 |
| Public/Products Liability | £1,000,000 |

3. No Guarantee

Avoid companies who do not have a 'no quibble' guarantee. Reputable companies are always happy to guarantee their work. It also suggests that they have quality management systems in place. Look for **Total Satisfaction Guarantees** where possible.

4. Choosing a Company Without Testimonials

The best indicator of a company's ability to provide a first class service is past performance. Did you know that less than 5% of consumers receive **more than they expect** when purchasing services? Very occasionally, these consumers take the trouble to write to express their appreciation. Look for companies that have lots of testimonials from very satisfied clients. Avoid companies that are unable to provide you with testimonials, and plenty of them.

5. Absence Cover

Check out this important issue. What happens when your cleaner is on holiday or unwell? Do you get a replacement or do you have to clean yourself? A company should be providing you with the 'service' not the 'cleaner' and should confirm that they will cover all absences. Don't make the mistake of ending up with a 'hit and miss' service!

6. Staff Vetting

Avoid the mistake of choosing a company that doesn't insist on *at least* the following:

- **CRB** (Criminal Records Bureau) Standard Disclosure or **PNC** (Police National Computer) check confirming that there are no criminal convictions on file for that person.
- **SATISFACTORY** references from 2 former employers (or personal referees if there is no employment history)
- Satisfactory completion of a **TRIAL PERIOD** of *at least* twelve weeks duration

Four costly misconceptions about the domestic cleaning industry:

1. **Low Cost Options**
So-called 'Low Cost' options do not offer value for money. Often using agency or untrained operatives who may well not have been vetted at all! This is one service where you should not cut corners, as there is too much at stake - the safety & security of YOU and YOUR HOME!
2. **"All Company's Have Adequate Insurance Cover"**
You just cannot afford to get this one wrong! With 'no win/no fee' lawyers queuing up to fight claims on behalf of accident 'victims', don't leave this to chance or think "It wont happen to me". What will you do if it does? Insist on seeing evidence of adequate insurance cover.
3. **Using a Company is Always a Safe Option**
Not necessarily. It is important to research the firm first. Look for companies that value their employees and make sure that they can provide you with:
 - Plenty of testimonials. If their existing clients are not saying good things about them, how can you expect good results?
 - A copy of their insurance schedule. Don't just take their word for it!
 - A 'no quibble' money-back guarantee of their work
 - **Confidence** in their ability to deliver!
4. **Products are Included**
Make sure that you choose a company that only uses top quality products and equipment. Some companies supply inferior quality products that could damage your property or even the health of your family over a period of time.

The seven dangers of allowing the wrong person or company to clean your home:

1. **Insurance Cover**
Make sure that you protect yourself. Ask for a copy of their insurance schedule.
2. **Vetting**
Be certain that the company carries out all the necessary checks on their people. Ask for confirmation of this.
3. **Poor/Variable standards**
Check that the company can provide testimonials regarding their work. A company that is confident about the quality of its work will also gladly provide you with a "no-quibble" money-back guarantee.
4. **Respect for Your Home**
Satisfy yourself that the company will treat your home and your possessions with the respect that they deserve.

5. **Customer Service/Management**

Ensure that an appropriate level of both Customer Service and Management are readily available. It shouldn't be your job to manage their cleaner!

6. **Absence Cover**

Make sure that you get a replacement if your usual cleaner is unwell or on holiday. Ask the business owners!

7. **Agency/Untrained Staff**

You don't want someone in your home that has just come from an agency that morning! Ask the company what their average length of service is. If it cannot be measured in terms of 'years' then choose again.

Five benefits of a Home that is *Immaculately* Clean:

- Someone else to do it for you means that you have more time for yourself!
- A hygienically clean environment will give you real peace of mind!
- A fully managed, high quality service means that you can just forget about it - every week if you like!
- Imagine what a treat it is to have someone who even washes up and changes the beds for you!
- Shiny bathrooms every time mean no more unpleasant jobs for you to do!

Four Steps to an *Immaculately* Clean Home:

1. **MAKE A COMMITMENT TO ACT**

If you have been thinking about having your home cleaned, this guide should provide you with the information you need in order to make an informed choice.

2. **LIST YOUR QUESTIONS**

Make a list of any questions or queries that remain. Consult with your spouse or partner if you have one.

3. **GET THE ANSWERS**

Speak to the relevant person to get any remaining queries answered.

4. **INSTRUCT THE RIGHT COMPANY**

When you are **categorically** sure, appoint company of your choice.

Thank you for taking the time to read this FREE Consumer Awareness Guide. We hope that it has benefited you, even if only in a small way. The aim of this report is to educate consumers regarding the Domestic Cleaning Industry.

If you think we might be able to help you further, please contact us.



www.mercurydirect.co.uk



0800 169 33 55

For your information, the final page of this report contains a small selection of **Testimonials** that our company has received from clients. Many more can be found by visiting our website: **www.mercurydirect.co.uk** A copy of our **Guarantee** is also provided. **Refuse to settle for less!**

“I just wanted to know what the name of the lady who cleans my house is. She does a really excellent job.”

Marianna Corbett, Gidea Park

“We are truly delighted with the service and Melanie is absolutely fantastic”

Valerie & Bill Lyall, North Grays

“Thank you so much - the place is spotless!”

Amanda Jackman, Horndon-on-the-Hill

“I’m over the moon! I can’t believe what a difference it makes to my life. Thank you so much.”

Leanne Hilton, Emerson Park

“We came home to a show home - we were absolutely thrilled!”

Michelle Hoey, Chafford Hundred

“Marion is a VERY good cleaner - thank you”

Wendy Wenham, Herongate

“I’m ecstatic, thrilled!

Gillian Chisnall, Grays

“Thank you for sending Danuta, she is fabulous. We had a bit of a party yesterday and I apologised because the place was a tip but Danuta said ‘Don’t worry, it’s my job to clean!’”

Kealie Haste, Orsett.

“They really did do a good job. Please pass on my thanks.”

Daniel Cairns-Brown, Laindon

“Many thanks to you and the girls - a wonderful job!”

Debbie Eagles, Corringham

“May I take this opportunity to say how pleased I am with Michelle. She is a lovely lady and cleans my home beautifully.

I look forward to returning home on Thursdays!”

Andrea Perry, Chafford Hundred

Our ‘No-Quibble’ Guarantee:

“If you are ever less than 100% totally satisfied, we will give you a prompt and courteous refund”