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Website Planning Checklist

For small businesses in England

Use this checklist before you commission a new website. Tick each item as you go. The better prepared you are, the faster and more affordable your project will be.

1. Goals

- [ ] Write down the single most important action you want visitors to take (call, WhatsApp, enquire, book or buy).
- [ ] List three things your website must achieve in its first year.
- [ ] Decide how you will measure success, for example enquiries per month.

2. Customers

- [ ] Describe your ideal customer in two sentences.
- [ ] List the ten questions customers ask before they buy from you.
- [ ] Note the area you serve and whether customers search locally or nationally.

3. Pages and features

- [ ] List the pages you need now (Home, About, Services, Contact and so on).
- [ ] List pages you may want later, such as a blog or case studies.
- [ ] Decide which features you need: forms, booking, online shop, gallery, reviews, newsletter.

4. Content

- [ ] Gather or write the text for each page, or budget for copywriting.
- [ ] Collect high quality photographs of your work, team and premises. Avoid images you do not have the rights to use.
- [ ] Gather proof: accreditations, insurance, guarantees and genuine customer reviews you are permitted to publish.

5. Brand

- [ ] Find your logo in the best quality available, ideally a vector file (SVG, AI, EPS or PDF).
- [ ] Note your brand colours and any fonts you use.
- [ ] Collect three websites you like and write down why.

6. Domain, email and hosting

- [ ] Confirm who owns your domain name and that the registration is in your name.
- [ ] Locate the login for your domain registrar.
- [ ] Decide whether you need professional email addresses.
- [ ] If you already have hosting, find the login details.

7. Legal and accessibility

- [ ] Prepare business details for your website footer (trading name, and company number if you are a limited company).
- [ ] Plan a privacy policy and cookie policy that reflect what your website actually does.
- [ ] Make sure text, colours and forms will be usable by everyone, including keyboard and screen reader users.

8. SEO and AI search

- [ ] List the services and locations you want to be found for.
- [ ] Make sure your business name, address (if public) and contact details are identical everywhere online.
- [ ] Claim your Google Business Profile and Bing Places listing if you are eligible.
- [ ] Write clear answers to common questions; search engines and AI tools rely on them.

9. Launch

- [ ] Test every page on a phone and a computer.
- [ ] Test every form and check the emails arrive.
- [ ] Set up Google Search Console, Bing Webmaster Tools and analytics with cookie consent.
- [ ] Redirect old page addresses to their new equivalents.
- [ ] Tell your customers and update your social profiles and email signature.

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