CHAS, SafeContractor or Constructionline: Which Do You Need?

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Why Accreditation Matters

Many clients will not let you through the door without a recognised health and safety accreditation. This is especially true in construction, housing, facilities management and the public sector, where procurement teams need a quick, reliable way to confirm that a contractor manages health and safety properly before they are allowed to tender, let alone start work. A client managing dozens or hundreds of contractors cannot realistically audit every one of them in person, so they rely on a third party assessment instead.

Accreditation schemes work by assessing your written health and safety arrangements, your policies, your risk assessments and your training records, against a defined standard. If you pass, you receive a certificate that clients can check before awarding work. A contractor working in construction will usually be asked for this at pre-qualification stage, and the same is often true for contractors working with housing associations, schools and NHS estates.

It is worth being clear about what accreditation is and is not. It is evidence that your systems meet a recognised standard on the day you were assessed. It is not a substitute for actually managing health and safety day to day, and assessors will expect to see that your paperwork reflects how work is genuinely carried out on site, not just what looks good in a folder.

Understanding SSIP and Mutual Recognition

Safety Schemes in Procurement, usually shortened to SSIP, is not itself an accreditation scheme. It is an umbrella body that sets core criteria which member schemes must assess against, and it allows those member schemes to recognise each other's assessments. This is often called deemed to satisfy, or DTS, recognition.

In practice, this means that if you already hold one SSIP member scheme's accreditation, you may be able to apply for recognition under another member scheme without going through the full assessment again. This can save time and duplicated effort if several clients ask for certificates from different schemes. However, mutual recognition only works if your client actually accepts it. Some frameworks and larger clients insist on their preferred scheme's own certificate regardless of what else you hold, so always check before assuming DTS will be accepted.

It is also worth remembering that SSIP core criteria are a minimum standard. Individual schemes can, and do, ask additional questions on top of the core criteria, so passing one assessment does not guarantee you will sail through another scheme's full application without any extra evidence.

CHAS, SafeContractor and Constructionline Compared

CHAS, the Contractors Health and Safety Assessment Scheme, is one of the longest established schemes and is widely recognised, particularly in the public sector and by principal contractors. It assesses your health and safety policy, risk management arrangements and competence against the SSIP core criteria.

SafeContractor is another well established SSIP member scheme, widely recognised across many sectors. Like CHAS, it assesses your written health and safety arrangements and issues a certificate, and many clients treat the two schemes as broadly interchangeable.

Constructionline is slightly different in that it is a pre-qualification and supplier management service built specifically around the construction and built environment sector. Alongside health and safety, it can capture financial standing, insurance details and other pre-qualification information that clients commonly ask for in one place. Depending on the membership level you choose, it can also include a health and safety assessment, so check that it meets the SSIP standard your clients expect before relying on it.

Choosing the Right Scheme

The right scheme is the one your clients accept, not the one that is cheapest or easiest to apply for. Before paying for anything, ask the clients and frameworks you are targeting which schemes they accept, and whether they recognise SSIP mutual recognition from a different scheme you already hold. There is no commercial benefit in holding an accreditation that none of your target clients will accept.

- Ask your key clients and tender teams which specific schemes they require
- Check whether SSIP deemed to satisfy recognition will actually be accepted, or whether they insist on their named scheme

- Decide whether you need the wider pre-qualification information, such as insurance and financial standing, that Constructionline provides
- Compare renewal costs and assessment depth across the schemes you are considering
- Make sure your underlying health and safety management genuinely supports whatever you apply for

What Assessors Actually Look For

Accreditation assessors are not interested in a generic downloaded policy. They expect a written health and safety policy, which the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires of employers with five or more employees, and which should be signed by a director or senior manager. They also expect risk assessments that genuinely reflect the work you carry out, not a template bought online and never updated.

They will also expect to see evidence of training records showing who has completed what, arrangements for competent advice, whether through an internal appointment or a competent person service, and a working system for recording and investigating accidents and near misses. If you manage subcontractors, you will need to show how you check their competence too, since your accreditation can be undermined by poor arrangements further down the supply chain.

Equipment maintenance records, PPE arrangements, insurance certificates and evidence of monitoring, such as periodic audits or site inspections, all form part of a typical submission. Assessors may cross check what is written against what staff actually say in interviews or site visits, so policies that exist only on paper tend to be found out quickly.

Who Is Responsible, and How Often to Review

Accreditation is usually submitted by a director, operations manager or dedicated health and safety lead, but keeping the certificate current is a whole-business responsibility, not a one-off task for whoever filled in the form. Most schemes require annual renewal, and your underlying policies and risk assessments should be reviewed at least as often, and sooner if your work activities, equipment or legislation change, in line with the general duty to keep arrangements under review set out in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Keep dated copies of every policy version, risk assessment, training record and accident log, since assessors and clients may ask to see historic evidence as well as current documents. Accident records connected to a RIDDOR report should be kept for a minimum of three years, and training certificates should be retained for as long as the course remains relevant to the worker's role. A common and entirely avoidable mistake is treating accreditation as a box ticked once a year, then letting the policies and risk assessments behind it go stale until the renewal deadline forces a rushed update.

Getting It Right the First Time

Businesses that struggle with accreditation applications are often struggling with their underlying

health and safety management, not with the application form itself. Sorting out real policies, genuine risk assessments and proper training records first makes the assessment process straightforward, whichever scheme you choose.

If your current systems need work before you apply, Integral Safety's accreditation support service reviews what you already have, identifies the gaps against the scheme you are targeting, and helps you put compliant arrangements in place ready for submission. We are based in Coalville and support businesses across Leicestershire and the wider East Midlands, so if you would like to talk through which scheme makes sense for you, see our accreditation support in Coalville page or get in touch.

Talk to Integral Safety Ltd

We are health and safety consultants based in Coalville, Leicestershire, working with businesses across the East Midlands. If anything in this guide applies to your workplace, we can help.

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This guide is general information about UK health and safety law and practice, correct as at 11 November 2026. It is not advice on your particular circumstances. The latest version is at https://integralsafetyltd.co.uk/blog/chas-safecontractor-and-constructionline-which-accreditation-does-your-business-need.