

Chimney Sweep

A chimney sweep unblocks chimney flues and sweeps them clean of soot, tar, birds' nests and anything else that could be blocking them, to prevent chimney fires or dangerous gas fumes. They are sometimes called chimney engineers.

The Work

You might:

- check that the chimney flue is clear of leaves, birds' nests or other debris which may have fallen inside
- check that the chimney flue and pot are structurally sound, perhaps using camera equipment
- fix sheeting over the fireplace to stop soot getting into the room
- fit brushes on to rods and push them up the chimney, or else lower brushes attached to a heavy ball down the chimney, to loosen the soot
- use a vacuum cleaner to suck the loose soot down from chimney flue
- remove hardened soot or coal tar build-up from inside chimney flues, using mechanical rotary brushes
- bag the soot, dispose of it correctly and clean up all areas
- advise customers about ongoing maintenance and when the chimney flue needs to be cleaned again
- fitting or removing birdguards and flue liners and carrying out smoke and fumes testing.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual income may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the demand for the job
- whether you work part time or full time and whether you carry out extra work on the chimneys.

The salary of a trainee chimney sweep might start at around £17,000 a year.

Chimney sweeps can charge customers between £45 and £90 per job.

Conditions

- You travel to each client's premises and will usually visit a number each day.
- You might have to work evenings or weekends to suit the clients.
- The work will be dirty and dusty. You will wear protective overalls, a facemask and a respirator.
- You may work alone.
- You might have to pay high insurance premiums due to the danger of the job.
- If self-employed, you usually have to buy a lot of expensive equipment and a van.
- You will be standing, kneeling and bending.
- You may work longer hours in autumn and spring, when demand is higher.

Getting In

- You do not need formal qualifications but a good general education is useful.
- You should be fit with no allergies to dust or chemicals.
- You usually need a driving licence.
- You should have a good head for heights.
- For some jobs you may need a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) Card.
- Experience in other practical areas such as construction can be useful.

What Does It Take

You should be:

- honest and reliable
- able to use a range of tools
- well organised and tidy at work
- aware of health and safety issues
- able to cope with wildlife such as birds and spiders
- able to get on with a wide range of people
- able to work alone
- business-minded, if you are self-employed.

Training

- Training is on the job, usually from an experienced sweep.
- The National Association of Chimney Sweeps (NACS) run several training courses.
- The Guild of Master Chimney Sweeps also provides an introductory 4-day intensive training, which includes study which includes on site training and mentoring.
- To work with gas appliances you must become registered with the Gas Safety Register. Getting HETAS accreditation for solid fuel from the National Association of Chimney Sweeps (NACS) would also be useful, as would the NVQ in Chimney Engineering Level 2.

Getting On

- Throughout the UK, there are over 400 members of the National Association of Chimney Sweeps.
- You may not earn enough by sweeping chimneys alone. You might have to train for other jobs, such as installing fireplaces and chimney linings and repairing chimneys.
- Most chimney sweeps are self-employed or work in small firms, so there are few opportunities for promotion.

More Information

Recently chimney sweeps have reported increased demand due to more use of solid fuels.

Contacts

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Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

Predicted Employment Statistics : Not available this career.