Put the controls into use

A practical starting point for subcontractors who want fewer payment and contract disputes, and better records when a problem does arise. Use one copy for each project.

What is in your pack

- This implementation guide explains what to check before work starts, what to record during the job and how to close it out.
- The editable Excel workbook contains seven project registers with space for 100 entries per working register. It has filters, date formats and selected status checks. There are no macros or external connections.
- Six editable text templates cover everyday correspondence and a notice preparation checklist. Open them in any text editor and copy the completed wording into your normal email or document system.

Start with one live project

- Nominate a commercial owner and a deputy. They need access to the subcontract, project records and notice delivery system.
- Complete Project setup before relying on the registers. Transfer verified deadlines into the team's calendar with reminders and cover for absence.
- Test the process using a real instruction or payment cycle. Confirm that another person can find the record, understand the action and locate the proof of delivery.

Use within its scope

The guide is general information for construction subcontracts in England and Wales, checked on 29 September 2026. It is not a review of your subcontract, legal advice or a guarantee that claims will be avoided. Scotland and Northern Ireland need their own legal and contractual checks. Your actual contract, amendments and circumstances control the required notices and dates. Get project-specific advice when these are uncertain.

If a problem is already live

Do not delay urgent action to complete this pack. An approaching deadline, rejected notice, threatened suspension or termination, adjudication notice or court document needs prompt advice. The registers do not serve notices, send reminders or preserve rights automatically.

Before signing or starting work

Put the full agreement in one controlled project folder. A signed order may refer to other documents that materially change the risk.

Check the agreement

- Record the correct legal parties, subcontract form and edition, scope, drawings, specifications, programme, tender qualifications and agreed price basis. Save the documents incorporated by reference.
- Identify amendments, Z clauses, document priority and any terms imported from the main contract. Record unresolved conflicts and obtain a written answer before relying on an assumption.
- Check design responsibility, interfaces, access, testing, protection of work, insurances, warranties, indemnities, bonds and guarantees. Refer unclear or onerous terms to an appropriate adviser.
- Check the process for instructions, changes, time claims, loss and expense or compensation events. Find any condition precedent, time bar and finality provision.
- Record payment application requirements, valuation rules, deductions, retention, due dates, final dates for payment and close-out conditions. An invoice alone may not be a valid application or notice.

If working under a letter of intent

Record the authorised scope, expenditure cap, expiry date, payment basis and person entitled to authorise further work. Review actual and committed spend against the cap. Arrange a documented decision before the cap or expiry is reached. Do not assume a purchase order, ongoing discussions or silence extends authority.

Complete the setup register

For every control, name the owner, deputy, review date and evidence location. Use Open or In progress until there is a working control. Record a test and reviewer before marking it Implemented. Use Not applicable only with a reason.

Keep commercial and technical responsibilities clear

This pack supports contract and record management. It does not replace safe systems of work, technical design, quality plans, statutory duties or insurance advice. Continue to follow the procedures and appointments those matters require.

Control notices and deadlines

A clear record is useful only if the required communication reaches the correct recipient in the required form and on time.

Build the deadline diary from the subcontract

- Record the obligation, clause and amendment, trigger event and when it occurred or became known. Keep evidence of those facts.
- Confirm the applicable period, how time is counted, permitted service methods, recipient, address or portal, time zone and any cut-off or deemed-service rule.
- Have the operative date checked and enter it yourself. The workbook deliberately does not calculate contractual deadlines from generic periods.
- Set an earlier internal action date, owner and deputy. Use a calendar or task system for alerts: the workbook does not notify anyone.
- Keep the issued document, attachments, delivery evidence and any acknowledgment together. Record the actual sent time and chase any separate response or follow-up required.

Separate the different communications

For NEC work, an early warning is not a substitute for a compensation-event notification. Check the precise subcontract and amendments for each process. Do not copy a main-contract period into a subcontract diary. Under JCT or bespoke terms, identify each required notice and supporting submission separately.

Use the notice preparation checklist

The pack contains a checklist to prepare a notice, not a universal notice ready to send. Check the contractual basis, required content and service rules with the responsible adviser. Routine meeting minutes, a quotation or an informal message may not meet those requirements.

Read the workbook flags correctly

The Deadline diary compares your entered action date with today's date. It flags missing or unverified dates and overdue open entries. Sent and Checked are administrative records, not confirmation of legal validity. Separate follow-up obligations need separate rows.

Make the payment cycle repeatable

Prepare a supported application, record its delivery and reconcile what was assessed and received. Keep each payment cycle separate.

Before the application

- Check the required application date, recipient, delivery method, valuation date, format and supporting evidence. Record the due date and final date for payment separately.
- Measure completed work against the agreed pricing basis. Link approved and disputed changes to the Change log. Check materials, off-site goods, daywork and other items against the subcontract requirements.
- Show how the sum is calculated. Keep cumulative and period amounts clear, avoid double counting previous payments and identify VAT, CIS and retention consistently.
- Have the application and attachments checked by the named reviewer. Submit through the permitted channel and save a copy and proof of delivery.

After submission

- Record payment notices, assessments and any pay less notice as received. Keep the amount and stated basis, the received date and the actual document.
- Compare the assessment with the application line by line. Ask for the reason and evidence for differences promptly. Track the disputed items and next action separately.
- Reconcile receipts with the bank and remittance, including any legitimate VAT, CIS and retention treatment. An unexplained difference is a question to investigate, not automatically a recoverable debt.

Use the payment register consistently

The workbook records period amounts only. Enter all three amounts on the same basis and label that basis. Its unpaid difference is the application amount less cash received; it does not determine the legally payable or notified sum. Blank amounts stay missing; enter a numeric zero only when it is known.

When payment is late or reduced

Ask for clarification and record the response. A missing notice, disputed deduction or late payment may need a different contractual or statutory response. Do not suspend, terminate or assume a notice is invalid just because a workbook flag appears. Seek advice before taking those steps.

Record change while it happens

Link each change to its instruction, its effect and the records that explain the extra time or money. Keep facts separate from assumptions.

At the first instruction or event

- Create a change ID. Record who said or issued what, when, the location, drawing revision and the work affected. Check that the person has the required authority.
- Use the instruction clarification template to confirm the facts. Do not assume silence amounts to approval, or that informal confirmation replaces a formal notice.
- Check notice and quotation obligations immediately. Record separate deadline diary entries where required; do not wait for complete cost information if an earlier notification is required.
- Consider the effect on sequence, access, labour, plant, materials and subcontract completion dates. Preserve the current programme and relevant revisions.

Build an evidenced valuation

- Identify the contractual valuation method and relevant rates. Record the quantity, productivity assumption, supporting quotations and any exclusions.
- Keep instructed work, proposed work and disputed work distinguishable. Record costs actually incurred separately from forecasts.
- Track submitted, agreed and disputed amounts and the reason for each difference. A signed daywork sheet may record resources without agreeing entitlement or the final value.
- Record time consequences separately from price. Agreement of a change price does not necessarily resolve its time effect, and the reverse can also be true.

Close the record properly

Save the written decision, its scope and any unresolved points. Update the payment application and programme records as appropriate. Do not label the whole issue agreed if only one part has been accepted.

If told to proceed before agreement

Check the instruction and contractual duties, record the unresolved commercial position and get advice where needed. This pack does not authorise refusing work, ignoring an instruction or proceeding outside an agreed cap.

Keep site evidence usable

A brief daily record made at the time is usually more useful than a long account reconstructed after the people involved have left.

Daily minimum

- Record date, location, activity, planned work and actual progress. Identify the author and the people who can verify the facts.
- Capture labour and plant used, material deliveries, access restrictions, missing information, weather where relevant, interruptions and the duration of affected activities.
- Record instructions and mitigation actions. Link the Site records row to the change ID, notice ID, drawings, timesheets, delivery tickets and photographs.
- Keep photographs dated and identifiable by location and subject. Preserve originals and metadata. Record corrections transparently rather than replacing an inconvenient original.

Protect the quality record

Save inspection requests, approvals, test certificates, hold-point releases, handover records and evidence before work is covered up. Record any damage or alleged defect promptly, arrange an appropriate inspection and retain the instruction and evidence for remedial work. Notify insurers where the policy requires it.

A simple folder structure

- 01 Contract and amendments; 02 Programme and instructions; 03 Notices and delivery evidence; 04 Payment applications and assessments.
- 05 Changes and valuations; 06 Daily records and photographs; 07 Quality and handover; 08 Completion and retention; 09 Weekly reviews.
- Use names such as PROJECT_2026-09-29_CHG-001_instruction.pdf. Store the source email or portal export as well as a convenient PDF copy.

Access and retention

Give the owner and deputy access, restrict sensitive material to those who need it and test that backups can be restored. Set a documented retention period with your adviser and insurers, considering the contract, claims, legal obligations and personal data. Do not delete relevant records while a dispute, investigation or preservation requirement is live.

Review risks every week

Use a short review with the people who can act. Deal with urgent events when they happen; the weekly meeting is not a reason to wait.

Work through the next actions

- Check upcoming and missed notices, applications, response dates and internal review dates. Confirm cover for anyone absent.
- Review unconfirmed instructions, outstanding quotations, unagreed changes and unresolved payment differences. Name the next action and its owner.
- Check programme changes, restricted access, quality concerns and missing records. Record what can be done now to reduce the effect.
- Pick one recent item and trace it from event to record, notification, delivery proof and follow-up. This tests the process rather than merely counting filled rows.

Use the action register

Record the issue, specific action, owner, due date, evidence needed and the person who will check completion. If the control failed, record the corrective action and retest. Do not close a row just because someone says it has been dealt with.

Escalate with the facts

Prepare a short chronology, the relevant subcontract and amendments, the amount or time at issue, deadlines, what has been sent and the missing evidence. Identify the decision needed and by when. Avoid admissions, settlement commitments or statements about entitlement that have not been authorised.

Illustrative example

A site manager asks for a rerouted service. The subcontractor records CHG-001, saves the marked-up drawing and confirms the instruction and authority. The commercial owner checks notification requirements that day, records the verified dates, and keeps the required notice separate from the clarification email. The site team records labour and materials against CHG-001. At review, an unanswered quotation remains open with a named follow-up. These steps improve the evidence; they do not establish entitlement on their own.

Finish the job without losing the records

Plan close-out early enough to resolve missing documents and commercial differences before the team moves on.

Prepare completion and the final account

- Check the contractual meaning and evidence of completion, sectional completion, testing, commissioning, handover and defects correction. Record who can certify or accept each item.
- Reconcile the original value, all changes, provisional items, deductions, previous payments and retention. Identify which items are agreed and which remain disputed.
- Track final-account submissions, response periods and any finality or challenge deadline using the actual subcontract provisions.
- Retain the evidence of handover, manuals, as-built information, warranties, training delivered by the project team where required, and relevant certificates.

Track retention release

Record the amount, the release condition, evidence needed, relevant event or certificate and the verified action date for each release stage. Do not assume practical completion automatically releases all retention. Record actual receipts and unresolved deductions separately.

Check before signing a settlement

Understand releases, waivers, final-account agreements and any statement that settles all claims. Check the treatment of unresolved changes, time, defects, insurance and retention. Get advice where the effect is uncertain; do not sign solely to obtain an interim payment.

The first month of implementation

- First day: appoint the owner and deputy, gather the contract and enter urgent verified dates.
- First week: run one payment or change item through the process and fix missing access, evidence or approvals.
- Following weeks: review open actions, sample delivery evidence and retest any failed control. Keep the review record.
- At the next project: copy the blank pack, check the new subcontract and reset all owners, dates, addresses and assumptions. Do not inherit the last project's contractual rules.

Reference points and further help

These sources explain the framework. The pack's registers and implementation steps are Quantsurv's original practical tools, not official JCT or NEC forms.

Construction payment legislation

The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, Part II, as amended, includes payment mechanisms, notices and related rights for contracts within its scope. Use the current legislation and the correct jurisdiction when checking a particular subcontract. This guide does not supply universal notice periods.

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/53/contents

NEC process guidance

NEC's Links between key NEC processes explains that early warnings, programmes and compensation-event notifications serve different purposes. Its main-contract examples must not be copied into a subcontract without checking the applicable form and amendments.

https://www.neccontract.com/news/links-between-key-nec-processes

JCT contract documents

JCT publishes different contract and subcontract forms, with their own documents and processes. Obtain the actual executed documents and amendments for your project rather than relying on a general description of a JCT contract.

https://www.jctltd.co.uk/

Putting the controls in place with Quantsurv

You can use this pack yourself. If you need help reviewing your subcontract or implementing a particular control, explore the Claim Prevention services. Any paid work has its own agreed scope and fixed fee. The free download does not create a consultancy appointment.

https://www.quantsurv.com/prevention

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