



Security Industry Authority

Do you buy security?

The regulator's guide to buying private security



gov.uk/sia

Do you buy security?

The security of your staff, premises, equipment and other assets is a serious commitment. Investing time in the procurement process by undertaking some basic checks can reap rewards when it comes to buying security.

When defining your requirements do you:

- start your analysis with a risk and threat assessment
- define what your security policy and strategy should be
- assess what additional duties security officers might undertake without distracting from their primary function
- look at whether additional qualifications and/or training will be required by security staff who are needed to carry out additional duties

When tendering do you:

- consider seeking expert advice for drafting the invitation to tender
- ensure the incumbent and new service provider will follow TUPE requirements
- consider inviting shortlisted companies to make a presentation of their proposals
- visit a 'similar service' customer of your preferred bidder

If not this is what you need to know:

The **Approved Contractor Scheme (ACS)** provides a recognised hallmark of quality within the private security industry. ACS companies are rigorously assessed against 78 performance indicators across seven essential criteria, helping you to make decisions that are based on quality and value.

When you choose a security supplier who is a Security Industry Authority (SIA) approved contractor, you can be sure that the business you are working with has been independently checked and is one of the top suppliers in the sector.

How to find an SIA approved contractor

To see if a supplier is an SIA approved contractor go to: services.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/Pages/acs-roac.aspx

To see if an individual (including a company director) is licensed go to: services.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/rolh

Buying security on cost alone is a risk

Buying cut-price security may be appealing at the time but consider the possible consequences. Your brand could be at risk if you buy low-quality security that goes wrong. Experience of reporting in the media shows that it is the high-profile name of the buyer that makes the headlines, not the security contractor.

If your security supplier offers very low hourly rates for provision of security, this could be an indication of a breach of legal requirements – which may impact on insurance cover and have further consequences. The SIA works closely with other agencies and we prosecute offenders through the criminal courts.

Good-quality security provision reduces the danger of violent incidents; lower-quality provision can raise the risks of harm to your staff and the public as well as potentially damaging your brand.

As a responsible buyer you can also play a role by recognising the high-quality security provided by people of all backgrounds, ages, abilities and genders.



If you decide not to use an SIA approved contractor, then you should consider the following checks:

- BS10800:2020 – Provision of security services. Code of practice
- BS7499 – Code of practice for static site guarding and mobile patrol services
- BS7858 – Code of practice for security screening and vetting of personnel employed in a security environment
- BS7984 – Code of practice for keyholding response services

- are directors, managers, supervisors and frontline security operatives properly licensed?
- does the chosen supplier have audited accounts (unless it's a new business), a PAYE scheme and VAT?
- are the appropriate insurances in place?
- does the company website check out?
Independently verify all accreditation marks and testimonials
- does the supplier have appropriate staff employment conditions in place?
(National Living Wage, National Minimum Wage if applicable, holiday entitlement, statutory sick pay, stakeholder pension and adherence to the working time directive)
- other due diligence checks: Open source research on the business, directors and shareholders – consider a credit check; Companies House documents will help identify whether the company is a 'phoenix'. Who are the past directors and shareholders? Do they all check out?
- have you been clear in the contract about the use of sub-contractors or labour provision?

- are ongoing audit practices in place?
- will there be out of hours spot checks done to assure that officers are actually on site and able to detect security breaches?
- is the business you contracted with actually supplying the services?
- who do the security operatives believe they work for?
- does the information on the invoices and the bank accounts match what you expect?

Or you can simply appoint an SIA approved contractor knowing that all these checks and more have already been done by the SIA – saving you time and money.

Working together to evaluate your needs

Approved contractors will work with you to evaluate your security needs. They can also assist with a pre-market assessment, prior to the formal invitation to tender. What are the right questions you should ask of the people who you will trust with your business assets, staff protection and premises security?

(Public sector buyers will need to ensure that they comply with clause 40 of the Public Procurement Regulations 2015).

Work undertaken by the SIA has shown that organised crime tends to target businesses that fail to carry out due diligence checks and buy on price alone. Well-informed buyers can protect their brand name and business reputation by making their decisions based on quality and value.

Buying Right for Scotland

If you are a buyer in Scotland you should also:

Understand your responsibilities under the Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010 and the current Government Procurement requirements for security services. Failure to follow the requirements may put project funding at risk.

Is it a government contract?

If yes, then SPPN2/2010 applies and an SIA approved contractor is required.

Is it an NHS construction contract under Frameworks Scotland 2?

If yes, then an ACS approved contractor is required.





The Security Industry Authority is the organisation responsible for regulating the private security industry. We are an independent body reporting to the Home Secretary, under the terms of the **Private Security Industry Act 2001**. Our remit covers the United Kingdom.

We have two main duties. One is the compulsory licensing of individuals undertaking designated activities within the private security industry; the other is to manage the voluntary Approved Contractor Scheme, which measures private security suppliers against independently assessed criteria.

We also investigate and prosecute, often in partnership with other enforcement agencies, individuals and businesses that fail to comply with the Private Security Industry Act 2001.

The SIA logo is a certification mark owned by the Security Industry Authority and may not be used without the express permission of the SIA.

[gov.uk/sia](https://www.gov.uk/sia)

GEN/20-21/026