



Security Industry Authority



# How to become an Approved Contractor



**APPROVED  
CONTRACTOR**



The SIA Approved Contractor scheme gives your organisation the opportunity to distinguish itself as amongst the best providers of private security services in the UK. Approved Contractor status will also deliver valuable operational advantages that will help you to improve the utilisation of your security staff.

## The SIA - Setting standards for quality and probity

The Security Industry Authority (SIA) is a Non Departmental Public Body created under the Private Security Industry Act 2001. Our purpose as derived from the 2001 Act is to:

- remove from the private security industry those individuals who seek to use their position to pursue criminal activities
- raise standards of competence and professionalism in the industry
- increase public confidence in the industry

One of our key objectives is protecting the public, ensuring that only fit and proper people and organisations deliver regulated private security services. We contribute towards the Home Office purpose of “working together to protect the public” by helping to ensure the private security industry does not facilitate criminal activity. We do this by rigorously applying our criminality criteria, our Approved Contractor Scheme criteria and by enforcing compliance with the law.

The SIA will work in collaboration with the industry, its customers, the police service and the public to achieve these aims.

There are two aspects to private security industry regulation. The first is compulsory licensing for individuals operating within the private security industry. This helps ensure that those working within the industry are fit and proper persons who have received adequate vocational training for the role they perform.

The second aspect is the Approved Contractor Scheme (ACS). This provides a framework for setting, improving and monitoring the standards of management and of service delivery amongst suppliers of private security services; from licensable operatives deployed on site through to the executives in the boardroom. Approved Contractors are demonstrably committed to customer service and the compulsory licensing of their staff. This means that customers can be assured that private security operatives that an Approved Contractor deploys on their premises will be working within the law\*. As well as giving purchasers confirmation of the quality and standards that they can expect of Approved Contractors, the ACS will provide confidence and reassurance to wider stakeholders such as the public, police, employees and the local community.

\* Subject to conditions. See page 4.



## The SIA Approved Contractor Scheme

### Based upon a combination of recognised quality standards and industry best practice

The SIA Approved Contractor Scheme is based upon widely recognised business improvement models: ISO9001 and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model™. The Scheme also references the British Standard codes of practice applicable to the private security industry and conformance to the relevant codes is built into the ACS requirements. The ACS is however a distinct accreditation with two routes to approval, each designed to meet the same challenging requirements.

The ACS Standard encompasses all aspects of a business operation. It takes a holistic view of how well an organisation is managed, how effectively it services its customers and how well it treats its employees.

To attain Approved Contractor status, your organisation will need to demonstrate to an independent assessor that it has met defined standards within the following nine\* categories:

\* Passport schemes contain equivalent requirements but may group these under different headings.

**Strategy:** An SIA Approved Contractor has a clear strategic direction that enables it to deliver value to all stakeholders.

**Processes:** An SIA Approved Contractor has robust processes in place that ensure a consistent quality of service delivery to its customers and stakeholders.

**Commercial Relationship Management:**

An SIA Approved Contractor promotes robust and transparent commercial relationships with its customers, consumers and suppliers founded on mutual trust and respect.

**Financial Management:** An SIA Approved Contractor is financially viable with sufficient resources to meet its current and future obligations.

**Resources:** An SIA Approved Contractor has adequate premises, procedures and equipment to sustain its business within the relevant industry sectors.

**People:** An SIA Approved Contractor develops and implements plans to ensure its people are suitably trained, developed and cared for.

**Leadership:** An SIA Approved Contractor has leaders that can develop and implement an effective management approach that continually improves the organisation and its performance.

**Corporate Social Responsibility:** An SIA Approved Contractor should actively manage the impact of its services on the local community.

**Results:** An SIA Approved Contractor measures, understands and improves its achievements in relation to all stakeholders.

A full description of the standards and measures required to attain approval is available from our website: [www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/acs](http://www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/acs)

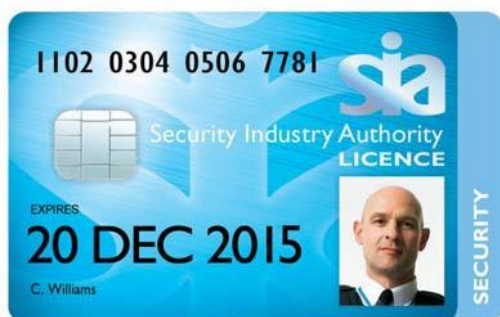


To assist organisations that are certified to ISO9001, or have developed their business around the British Standards, the ACS Standard (Self-Assessment Workbook Guide) has been cross referenced accordingly.

The scheme is currently available to private security companies operating in the United Kingdom. A company is eligible to apply for Approved Contractor status if it carries out any licensable activities under the Private Security Industry Act 2001 within the following:

- Manned Guarding
  - Security Guard
  - Door Supervisor
  - Close Protection
  - Cash and Valuables in Transit
  - Public Space Surveillance (CCTV)
- Key Holder
- Vehicle Immobiliser (Northern Ireland only)

Additional activities will be included in the scheme if they become licensable by the SIA.



## Benefits for SIA Approved Contractors

Successful applicants will benefit from the following:

- The authority to deploy a small proportion of staff whose licence applications are pending, in the form of an SIA Licence Dispensation Notice\*
- Inclusion in the Register of Approved Contractors published on the SIA website
- Authority to use the ACS Accreditation Mark on stationery, livery and websites
- SIA Approved Contractor certificates, wall plaques and lapel badges (numbers issued according to the size of the accredited organisation)
- Certain ACS businesses will be allowed to participate in the SIA's licensing process through the use of Licence Management functionality.

When your firm displays the ACS Accreditation Mark, you will reassure your customers, prospective customers and employees that they've chosen to work with one of the very best security providers in the business. They can be confident that you are committed to compulsory licensing of your security staff and that every operative you deploy on their premises will be working within the law\*.

Additional quantities of Approved Contractor certificates, plaques and lapel pins will be available for purchase by accredited organisations.

\* This proportion is currently 15% of licensable employees. Licence Dispensation Notices cannot be used by operatives who work with children or vulnerable adults. Staff are unable to work under Licence Dispensation Notices if the SIA has withdrawn an approved company's authority to do so. Where authority to deploy under a Licence Dispensation Notice is withdrawn this is recorded on our Register of Approved Contractors.



## Increased business opportunities

The benefits that the ACS will deliver to buyers of private security services are widely communicated to local authorities, government departments and the commercial sector.

The Register of Approved Contractors is available on the SIA website, along with a helpline telephone number for buyers to refer to when selecting suppliers. You will also receive an allocation of a specially prepared ACS Security Buyer's Guide. This will help explain to your customers, prospective customers and employees the practical benefits of choosing to work with an SIA Approved Contractor.

## Other exclusive benefits

Approved Contractors are invited to participate in regular regional events led by the SIA, in order to share best practice, review topical matters, plus receive licensing and other updates. All Approved Contractors will be kept informed of any new developments affecting accredited companies and the wider industry with regular updates.





## Routes to Approved Contractor status

There are two routes to gaining ACS accredited status. These are equivalent to each other and ensure that the standards required of all Approved Contractors are consistent. The current routes are:

Standard	Passport
Open to all companies - no previous accreditation required - use the Standard route which commences with the Self Assessment Workbook	The SIA may accredit an alternative scheme as being equivalent to the ACS Standard. A list of SIA accredited Passport schemes can be found on our website

## SIA eligibility requirements

*The requirements\* described in this section were correct at the time of going to press but are subject to on-going review and amendment. The requirements at the present time can be accessed on our web site:*

[www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/acs](http://www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/acs)

Once we receive your application, we will carry out an initial check on the form to ensure it is complete and we will inform you if any details are missing. Your application will then be reviewed against the following eligibility requirements:

**SIA licensed staff:** You must meet all SIA licensing requirements and your organisation must undertake licensable activity in every sector you are applying for.

**Fit and proper organisation / management:** We must be satisfied that your organisation is 'fit and proper' and that directors or partners are 'fit and proper' persons†. Any legal submissions to Companies House must be up to date and there should be no outstanding county court judgements against your organisation.

† Note any person who was a sole trader, director or partner of a business/firm providing a security service which has been liquidated, placed in administration or receivership within the previous 12 months may not be considered as a 'fit & proper' person.

**Licensed directors:** All licensable directors must hold a licence issued by the SIA under the Private Security Industry Act 2001.

**Significant complaints:** If there are significant concerns or complaints against your organisation or its senior management, these may have to be investigated further before proceeding.

**Self assessment:** The Self Assessment Work has been completed properly with justification provided for the self assessment.

**Payment of the appropriate fees:** See page 11.

\* Conformance with the ACS Standard is also a requirement for approval. For Passport route this is demonstrated through an existing accreditation. For the Standard route you must choose an independent assessing body to verify performance (see page 10).



## Routes to Approved Contractor Status

	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Passport</b>
<b>Step 1</b>	Download the Self-Assessment Workbook from the SIA website	Contact the relevant SIA approved scheme as detailed on the SIA website
<b>Step 2</b>	Record your scores and summary evidence in the ACS on-line Achievement Record (on the SIA website)  Ensure that you meet the required ACS Standard for all indicators in the Self-Assessment Workbook, enabling you to move to the next step	Gain accreditation to an SIA-approved scheme and obtain copy of relevant certificate
<b>Step 3</b>	Request ACS application pack (on the SIA website)	Request ACS application pack (on the SIA website)
<b>Step 4</b>	Complete and post back the application form to the SIA with relevant payment and submit your Achievement Record (on the SIA website)	Send application to the SIA with relevant payment and copy of certificate



## Licensing Requirements for the ACS

An ACS application, or existing approval, may be jeopardised if your organisation does not continue to meet mandatory licensing requirements for your licensable staff. Achieving and maintaining approval is dependent upon your organisation having at least the designated percentage of your security staff licensed at all times, regardless of whether or not they are currently deployed.

For all licensable activities a minimum of 85% of licensable staff must hold a licence at all times. This means that, at most, 15% of your licensable staff may have their applications in progress - that is, their licence applications have been accepted by the SIA. By 'accepted' we mean that we have confirmed that we are processing those applications.

You are eligible to apply for SIA ACS accreditation if your organisation meets the relevant SIA licensing requirement for both front line and non-front line staff.







## Routes to Approved Contractor status (continued)

Information provided at the time of application will be made available to your selected assessing body for verification. This will include information about directors and the status of employee licensing. Following confirmation by the SIA that you meet the eligibility requirement, the next step depends on your chosen route to approval:

	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Passport</b>
<b>Step 5</b>	Choose an Assessing Body from the SIA approved list and arrange for a visit to verify your self-assessment	Your application is approved
<b>Step 6</b>	Following successful verification, your application is approved provided you continue to meet the SIA eligibility requirements	

## Register to become an Approved Contractor

You can download the ACS Self Assessment Workbook form our website, plus register also register to access the on-line achievement record as part of your self assessment.

It costs nothing to start measuring your business against the Self Assessment Workbook. You only need to pay the Application Fee once you believe you have met the required standard and are ready to submit your application.

Our team of regional quality assurance managers can assist with your enquiries at any step, whether simply considering your options, self assessing, thinking about independent assessment audits or making a formal application.

There is no charge for this advice and support, which means you probably do not need to discuss matters with independent consultants. Please speak to us first.



## Choosing an Assessing Body

If you use the Standard route, you will need to choose an SIA approved assessing body to verify that your organisation meets the requirements of the ACS Standard.

A list of Assessing Bodies is available on the SIA website which provides links to the website of each assessing body. For more information visit: [www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/acs](http://www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/acs)

Each assessing body has undergone a rigorous selection programme which includes accreditation by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS), overseen by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Every individual assessor employed by an assessing body has also been trained to perform assessments using the SIA workbook.

The SIA does not set or collect fees for assessments. You will need to pay your chosen Assessing Body to carry out an assessment to SIA requirements. An assessment can span two days for a small organisation to, perhaps, 10 days or more for a larger organisation operating within multiple sectors of the private security industry. We may also provide specific instructions on each ACS application that could increase or reduce the time required from the general guidance.





## SIA Fees

The fees charged by the SIA relate to:

1. **Pre Approval.** The application fee, payable for processing the application including initial eligibility checks.
2. **On Approval.** The annual registration fee, payable on approval to cover operational costs of the scheme. This fee will be paid every year that approved status is maintained.

Your application fee is non-refundable once the processing of the application has begun. If successful, you will be invited to pay the annual registration fee for your Approved Contractor status to be confirmed.

Approved Contractor Scheme Fees			
Size of Organisation	Licensable Employees	Application Fee	Annual Registration Fee
Micro	Up to 10	£400	£15 per licensable individual deployed
Small	11 to 25	£800	
Medium	26 to 250	£1,600	
Large	Over 250	£2,400	

Other fees payable which are relevant to approval but are not levied by the SIA are:

- Fees paid to assessing bodies to assess whether the applicant meets the requirements for approval (see previous page)
- Fees paid to independent assessing bodies for relevant accreditations used to support Passport applications

## Contacts

**Website:** [www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/acs](http://www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/acs)

Use the site to obtain licence application forms, find a training provider, register your interest in the ACS, and to get the latest news and updates from the SIA.

**Email:** [ACSenquiries@sia.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ACSenquiries@sia.gsi.gov.uk)

For complex enquiries or requests.

The Security Industry Authority is committed to being a model of good regulation. We will be proportionate, accountable, consistent, transparent and targeted in all our work.

All reasonable efforts have been made to ensure that the information contained in this communication is accurate at time of going to press.

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