



Security Industry Authority

Notes from the workshops held at our 2019 national conference

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Introduction

We held our 2019 national conference on 12 November 2019 at the Oval cricket ground in London. During the conference we asked delegates to split into three groups and then asked each group to consider one of the following:

- a) Exploring our priorities.
- b) Themes for effective regulation.
- c) Future development of the private security industry.

These summary notes reflect the points raised in each of those workshops.

The ideas and suggestions recorded do not represent agreements, nor do they represent the official view of the SIA. We may agree or disagree with the views expressed by conference delegates. Still, we are considering and evaluating all of the points raised in the workshops as potentially valuable guidance from the industry and stakeholders.

Exploring our Priorities

Championing the industry's capability

Delegates felt the SIA should do more to inform the public about private security regulation. Focus should be on successful outcomes (particularly from applying good practice) and promoting good news over stories about 'bad apples' and highlighting enforcement. Positive profile raising of the private security industry will produce better public engagement and this will lead to greater co-operation and collaboration from stakeholders (including buyers, partners and the public themselves).

Improving standards

Participants thought the quality and content of training should improve. Enhancing training capability will positively impact purchasing decisions by buyers and pay rates for licence holders. Policing of training to reduce malpractice should increase and there should be clearer private security-specific career paths. Continuous professional development was important and should be made compulsory on pain of licence revocation as it is in other industries.

Themes for effective regulation

How can we create a level playing field in the industry?

- Business licensing.
- Make ACS approval mandatory?
- What are the highest risks? Ask the private security industry about what the risks are to the public. Put a value on the risks.
- The minimum wage is a big challenge. It causes the loss of licence holders. There should be guidance to the private security industry and buyers on the minimum wage.
- Operating on smaller margins.
- Buyers / procurement – the SIA should target those people who are liable for buying decisions, explaining to them what the Approved Contractor Scheme is.
- There is meant to be the same quality of training provided to all applicants, but the quality of licence holders varies that it raises questions about the quality of training that some of them receive. The SIA should check the quality of courses.
- The SIA should look at misleading references to the SIA on company websites.
- IR35 only targets medium and large companies. It should include small companies too.
- The SIA should put out more publicity campaigns.
- The SIA should register private security companies.
- In-house security should be regulated.
- ACS assessment should be standardised across business sizes.
- Address the problem of licence holders being paid cash in hand – lawfully run businesses are competing against those who are not following the law.
- The SIA should look at its standards/criteria in relation to the number of supervisors in teams, e.g. there should be one supervisor for every four operatives.
- ACS inspections/visits are focused on back office functions, and they should look at businesses holistically. ACS investigations are not well-inspected, and 'polished' contracts are shown.
- Bring in differentiation (for example, bronze, silver, and gold levels) in the Approved Contractor Scheme.
- Use of logo – take action against improper usage.
- Educate buyers on what the ACS is and what it means for them.
- The SIA should do investigations into tax compliance in the industry. Use any surplus from licence fees to do this, rather than return this money to the Home Office.
- The lack of enforcement means reputable companies with more overheads are competing with others that do not spend on these costs.

What are the problems to reporting in the industry?

- Intelligence led.
- There is more reportable practice because of social media.
- There was a widespread concern that people who report issues and concerns to the SIA do not hear back from the SIA. This creates the impression that the SIA does not follow up / does not do anything about what is reported to it. The SIA should keep people updated on progress and tell them the outcomes.
- There is a need to see outcomes in relation to training malpractice, and that perpetrated by companies and individuals.
- During face-to-face job interviews it becomes clear who have had poor trainers – what should we do with this information? Should it be sent to the SIA? They can't currently inspect trainers properly.
- The SIA is seen as the regulator, and people ask themselves "*should we be telling the regulator?*" This particularly happens when the behaviour they are considering reporting is not criminal.
- There should be a clear message from the SIA that it is not just gross misconduct and the actions of big companies that the SIA is interested in.
- There should be a better reporting process for malpractice.
- Make it easier to report online. There should be an app to enable people to check licences, qualifications, etc.
- The reporting process should be easier and clearer. Currently, things are reported under "*other*".
- There should be a confidential SIA hotline, with a dedicated unit of people staffing it.
- The SIA could offer an incentive to people to report.
- It was commented that Crimestoppers is too generic.
- ACS pacesetters = intermediaries.

How can we improve the quality of service in the industry?

- Add first aid (including mental health) training to the qualification.
- The new qualifications will help, particularly the inclusion of first aid training.
- There should be a single awarding body or module framework.
- By assisting more with the police.
- Can approved contractors influence those companies who aren't in the ACS?
- It needs to be remembered that companies without ACS approval can be good and legal.
- Do not adopt gold/silver/bronze as it is too diverse.
- Educate about logo and licence.

- The SIA should contact events management companies and venues to explain the risks of events (e.g. Christmas markets) and SIA licensing to them. Teach event awareness, particularly in relation to vulnerable people.
- The SIA should clarify with buyers and others what is required of them.
- Buyers need to be better informed.
- Better information about the Approved Contractor Scheme on website to point buyers in the right direction.
- Could buyers be held more liable if the security is non-compliant?
- Make buyers liable for lack of due diligence and buying non-compliant security.
- Explain brand damage i.e. how a poorly handled security incident can reflect badly on the buyer as well as the company involved.
- Action needs to be industry led, not led by the SIA.
- There should be registration of companies; either voluntary or mandatory.
- The SIA should help the private security industry to come together and set standards.
- The 'smart badge' will help.
- Businesses need to know who their SIA point of contact is.

Future development of the private security industry

Where will the private security industry be in the future?

How to make the industry more attractive to all individuals

- Concentrate on career paths and development i.e. CPD.
- Advertise and recruit for 'soft skills' and 'people skills'.
- Introduce a skills passport to show achievements and CPD.
- Adjustments to working hours could help with the gender gap.
- Better pay.
- Look at job satisfaction: recruit for careers, not jobs.
- Put greater emphasis on the fact that the private security industry is a customer service industry.

Impact of technology (both as a workplace tool and for labour movement)

- Better info gathering and use of 'big data'.
- Tech can be used to enhance what you already have i.e. as a force multiplier.
- Tech efficiencies can save money by reducing manpower. Will this saving be passed to staff as better pay?
- Online training.
- There needs to be better focus on customer service to retain value of the human element in security in the face of automation.
- Software to better manage people and projects.

Police and the private security industry

- Follow Scotland's example.
- Pursue better police/private security relationships at local and national level.
- Train security staff to take over roles such as scene preservation from the police.
- The private security industry can be an asset to the police if upskilled in accordance with police needs.