



NASDU

National Association of Security Dog Users

General Purpose Security Dog Buyer's Guide

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Scope

This Buyer's Guide is published by NASDU (National Association of Security Dog Users) to support informed procurement of Security Dog services. It is intended for procurement managers, security managers, facilities managers, event organisers, local authorities and all buyers of Security Dog services, whether procuring for the first time or reviewing an existing arrangement.

Foreword

Procuring security services is a significant responsibility. When those services involve Security Dogs, that responsibility extends beyond the usual considerations of cost, compliance and contractual terms. The welfare of the animals, the competency of the handlers, and the safety of the public all depend on informed procurement decisions.

The security dog industry in the United Kingdom is governed by a well-established framework of British Standards, licensing requirements and industry guidance. Yet experience shows that many buyers — even experienced procurement professionals — are uncertain about what questions to ask, what standards apply, and what documentation they should expect to receive.

This guide has been produced by NASDU (National Association of Security Dog Users) to address that gap. It does not seek to promote any particular supplier, to create new standards, or to tell buyers who they must use. Its sole purpose is to help buyers understand the industry, ask the right questions, and make confident, informed procurement decisions.

Whether you are procuring security dog services for the first time or reviewing an existing contract, we hope this guide provides the clarity and confidence you need. This guide is intended to be relevant regardless of the size of the provider you engage. The standards and obligations it describes apply equally to large national security companies, regional providers and individual handlers. The questions it recommends you ask are appropriate in any procurement context.

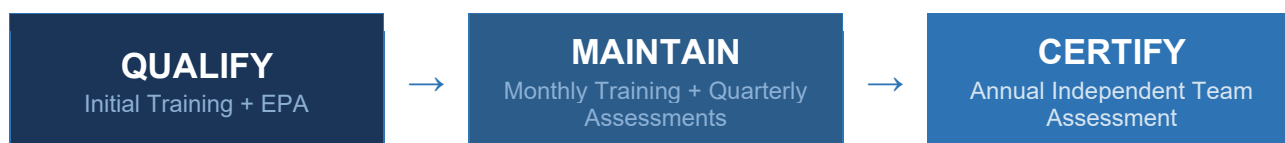
1. Introduction

Security dog teams are deployed across a wide range of environments — construction sites, events, retail parks, industrial premises, public spaces and critical national infrastructure. They provide a visible deterrent, a rapid response capability, and a flexibility that is difficult to replicate with other forms of guarding.

However, not all security dog teams are equal. The difference between a well-trained, properly assessed team operating in full compliance with the relevant British Standards, and a team that is not, can be significant — in terms of effectiveness, liability and, in some cases, safety.

A theme that runs throughout this guide is that competence in a security dog team is not a fixed state. It is established through initial training and qualification, maintained through monthly continuation training and quarterly assessments, and confirmed annually through independent team certification. A handler who qualified five years ago without ongoing assessment, or a team whose annual certificate has lapsed, is not currently compliant. Buyers who understand this three-stage model — qualify, maintain, certify — will ask better questions and make better procurement decisions. Note: throughout this guide the term EPA (End Point Assessment) is used. An EPA (End Point Assessment) is the formal practical assessment used to confirm a dog team's competency at the point of initial qualification. Annual team recertification and reteam assessments — where an established handler is paired with a newly trained dog — involve a similar practical

assessment process but are distinct from the initial qualification EPA. Throughout this guide, the term EPA is used primarily in the context of initial qualification unless otherwise stated.



This guide focuses specifically on General Purpose (GP) Security Dogs. GP dogs are trained to search for and detain intruders, provide a deterrent presence and support security operations. They are distinct from specialist dogs such as explosive detection, narcotics search or live person detection dogs, which are subject to different standards and procurement considerations.

Throughout this document, references are made to British Standards and other industry guidance. Buyers do not need to read or purchase these standards in full, but they should be aware that they exist, that reputable providers will be familiar with them, and that compliance with them is a reasonable expectation.

2. Why Deploy a General Purpose Security Dog Team?

Buyers who understand what a security guard does will recognise the core functions of uniformed presence, access control and incident response. A General Purpose Security Dog Team does all of those things — and adds capabilities that a human officer alone cannot replicate. Understanding what those additional capabilities are, and where they add genuine value, is the starting point for a well-founded deployment decision.

The primary advantage of a dog team is the dog's senses, particularly scent. A dog can detect the presence of a person concealed in a building or open area far more reliably and rapidly than a human search, and can do so in conditions of darkness, poor visibility and complex terrain where static guarding cannot operate effectively. This makes dog teams particularly well suited to low-light environments, large open sites, construction sites, events, and premises where building or area search is required at lock-up. A dog team can also cover ground — in terms of both speed and area — that would require multiple human officers to patrol to an equivalent standard.

The visible presence of a dog team also has a documented deterrent effect beyond that of a uniformed officer alone. Research and operational experience consistently show that a potential intruder or aggressor who might not be deterred by the presence of a guard will frequently reconsider when a dog is present. This deterrent effect operates around the clock, is not diminished by familiarity in the way that static guarding can be, and extends beyond the immediate vicinity of the handler. The combination of scent capability and deterrence makes dog teams a specialist tool that adds specific, measurable value where the risk profile justifies their deployment.

Dog teams are not a substitute for a broader security strategy. They are a specialist capability that adds value in specific operational contexts. The decision to deploy should be preceded by a risk assessment and a clear understanding of the operational requirement — both of which are covered later in this guide. Common deployment contexts where dog teams provide clear operational value include:

- Large open sites, perimeter patrol and construction sites where ground coverage is the primary requirement
- Building and area search at lock-up, where hidden persons must be detected before premises are secured
- Events, where visible deterrence and rapid response capability are needed alongside crowd management

- Low-light and night-time deployments where a dog's senses provide a decisive operational advantage
- High-value or high-risk premises where the consequences of an undetected intruder are significant

3. What Is a General Purpose Security Dog Team?

A General Purpose Security Dog Team consists of a licensed security handler and a trained Security Dog operating together as a team. Both the handler and the dog must meet defined competency and welfare standards before a team can be deployed on a client's site.

Within the GP category there are two distinct qualification levels, and buyers should be aware of the difference:

Dogs used in security roles must be assessed as fit for purpose. This includes their breed, temperament, physical health, drive and trainability. Not every dog is suited to security work, and a well-run provider will not deploy a dog that has not met the required assessment standards.

BS8517-1 specifies that General Purpose Security Dogs should be of a recognised guarding breed suitable for security work. Buyers should be aware that not all dogs are suitable for this role — certain breeds are specifically excluded under the Dangerous Dogs Act, and others may be considered unsuitable due to temperament or public perception. A reputable provider should be able to confirm that the dogs they deploy are of a breed recognised as suitable for GP security work in accordance with BS8517-1.

The Handler

The handler is equally important. A handler must hold a valid Security Industry Authority (SIA) licence and must be trained and assessed to work with their specific dog in a security environment. Handlers are required to:

- Hold a suitable SIA frontline licence
- Complete appropriate dog handling training
- Demonstrate competency in controlling their dog in operational conditions
- Understand and apply relevant legislation, including the Dangerous Dogs Act, the Animal Welfare Act, the Guard Dogs Act and the Health and Safety at Work Act
- Complete ongoing continuation training and quarterly assessments
- Undergo annual assessment and certification of their team

Key point: The handler and dog must be assessed as a team. A handler who is competent with one dog cannot simply be paired with a different dog without reassessment. When a provider changes a dog within an established team, both the new dog and the handler must be assessed together before deployment. This is a reteam assessment — not simply the introduction of a new dog — and is a requirement regardless of the handler's experience or the replacement dog's prior training history.

Sole Handler Requirement

NASDU best practice is that each dog is single handled — one dog working with one handler as a matched and certified team. This principle exists for important welfare and operational reasons. Dogs form strong working bonds with their handler, and changes in handler affect both performance and welfare. The Five Freedoms framework, particularly freedom from fear and distress and freedom to express normal behaviour, supports this principle: a dog that is routinely passed between handlers is less likely to have its welfare needs consistently met.

Dual handling — where one dog is handled by more than one handler — is not condoned as standard practice by NASDU. It may be permitted only under exceptional circumstances, specifically structured in-house security operations with appropriate kennelling and shift patterns, and only with a formal application to and approval by NASDU. Dog welfare must be the primary consideration in any such arrangement. Where dual handling is approved, a maximum of two handlers applies. Arrangements that involve a dog being shared between handlers as a cost-saving or convenience measure are not an approved practice.

One handler working with two dogs — one working while the other rests — is understood and accepted where operationally relevant, provided both dogs are fully and separately trained and certified as a team with that handler. Monthly continuation training, quarterly assessments and annual certification must be maintained independently for each dog. Buyers specifying continuous coverage over extended shifts should ask their provider how dog welfare and rotation are managed within a shift.

4. Understanding Your Requirement

Before approaching the market, buyers should take time to define what they actually need. A well-defined requirement will lead to better proposals, clearer contracts and more effective deployments. The following questions will help you establish your requirement.

What are you trying to achieve?

Security dog teams can fulfil a number of different functions. Being clear about your primary objective will help you specify the right service. Common objectives include:

- Deterrence — a visible dog team presence to discourage unauthorised access or anti-social behaviour
- Patrol — mobile or foot patrols with dog team across a site or estate
- Building and area search — checking premises for hidden persons before or after lock-up
- Event security — crowd management support and deterrence at public or private events
- Response — a rapid-response dog team to support incidents on site

There are two qualification levels within the GP category and it is important to understand the difference: ****Patrol Dog Only**** — the handler and dog are trained and assessed to patrol buildings and open areas. The dog will indicate on a concealed person encountered during that patrol. This qualification does not cover a formal, tasked search for a known or suspected concealed person, or a search for discarded or hidden property following an incident. ****Full General Purpose Security Dog**** — the handler and dog are trained and assessed across the full range of GP skills, including formal person search, property search and article search, in addition to patrol. Buyers whose operational requirement includes formal search capability must confirm the handler holds the full General Purpose Security Dog qualification. Deploying a Patrol Dog Only team where a formal search capability is required is a qualification gap that could have legal and reputational consequences for the buyer.

What type of site or environment?

The environment in which the dog team will operate has significant implications for the type of team required, the risk assessment needed, and the welfare considerations that apply. Consider:

- Is the site open or enclosed?
- Are members of the public present? If so, what age groups and vulnerability levels?
- Are there other animals on or near the site?
- What are the noise, light and weather conditions?
- Is the environment suitable for a Security Dog — are there hazards that would need to be addressed in a risk assessment?

What hours of coverage do you need?

Consider whether you need continuous coverage or periodic patrol. If continuous coverage is required, consider how the provider will manage handler fatigue, rest breaks for the dog, and handovers between shifts. Dogs cannot be worked continuously without adequate rest, and a responsible provider will build appropriate welfare breaks into their deployment model.

What is your budget?

Security dog services carry a higher cost than standard guarding deployments, reflecting the training, certification, welfare and ongoing assessment requirements. Buyers should be cautious of unusually low prices, which may indicate that standards are being compromised. The procurement of non-compliant services not only creates legal and reputational risk; it also undermines the wider industry.

For certain specialist deployment requirements — including crowd management, emergency response and conflict management — the NASDU Level 2 GP qualification may not provide the full range of skills required. In these circumstances, buyers should consider specifying a handler qualified to the NASDU Level 3 GP Accredited Learning Programme for a General Purpose Security Dog Handler. This programme builds on the Level 2 GP foundation and includes units covering crowd control, conflict management, emergency response, human scent tracking, article and property search, and emergency canine first aid. For further information contact NASDU directly at www.nasdu.co.uk.

Practical tip: Before approaching suppliers, produce a brief written Requirement Document covering your site details, desired hours of coverage, key objectives, and any known hazards or vulnerabilities. This will help providers give you accurate and comparable proposals.

5. Understanding Industry Standards

The security dog industry is supported by a framework of British Standards and regulatory requirements. You do not need to read or purchase these documents in full, but you should understand what they cover and be able to reference them when speaking with potential providers.

BS8517 — Security Dog Services

BS8517 is the primary British Standard for security dog services. It sets out requirements for the selection, training, assessment and deployment of security dogs and their handlers. There are two relevant parts:

- BS8517-1: Covers the provision of security dog services generally. It sets out requirements for service providers including management systems, training, documentation, welfare and deployment practices.
- BS8517-2: Covers the use of detection dogs, including drug search, explosives detection, firearms detection and live person detection. It is not applicable to General Purpose security dog services and is referenced here for completeness only. Buyers procuring GP security dog services should not accept BS8517-2 compliance as a substitute for BS8517-1 compliance.

BS8517-1 is published by BSI (British Standards Institution). As a code of practice, its provisions are expressed as recommendations — the word “should” is used rather than “shall” — meaning it does not carry the force of statute. However, any provider claiming compliance with BS8517-1 is expected to be able to justify any course of action that deviates from its recommendations. A deviation that cannot be explained or justified is a cause for concern.

Compliance with BS8517 is not a legal requirement, but it represents the recognised industry standard for competent provision of security dog services. Buyers should ask providers to confirm their compliance and, where relevant, to demonstrate that compliance through certification or assessment records.

What Does BS8517-1 Compliance Look Like?

A provider claiming compliance with BS8517-1 should typically be able to demonstrate:

- SIA licensed handlers
- Trained and assessed dog teams with current, recognised team certification
- Monthly continuation training records
- Quarterly independent assessments
- Annual independent reassessment and recertification
- Site-specific Assignment Instructions
- Site-specific risk assessments
- Appropriate welfare arrangements including transport, rest and veterinary access
- Purpose-built transport vehicles meeting BS8517-1 requirements
- Appropriate insurance cover
- Incident reporting procedures

Related British Standards

- BS7499 — Static Site Guarding and Mobile Patrol: This standard applies to the wider security guarding activity within which dog teams typically operate. Where a provider also delivers guarding services, they should be familiar with and compliant with BS7499.
- BS10800 — Provision of Security Services: A higher-level standard covering the management and delivery of security services. Compliance with BS10800 indicates a provider with strong management systems and a commitment to quality across their operations.
- BS7858 — Screening of Individuals Working in a Security Environment: This standard covers the pre-employment vetting of security personnel, including dog handlers. All handlers should be screened in accordance with BS7858, which includes identity checks, employment history verification and criminal record checks.

SIA Licensing

All security dog handlers operating in a contract capacity must hold a valid SIA (Security Industry Authority) licence. The SIA is the regulatory body responsible for licensing the private security industry. A handler without a valid SIA licence should not be deployed on your site, unless exempt under the relevant provisions of the Private Security Industry Act.

Buyers can verify SIA licence status at any time using the SIA licence checker at www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk. You should ask your provider to confirm that all handlers deployed to your site hold a current SIA licence and you should verify this independently.

Key standards at a glance:

- BS8517-1 — Security dog services (GP)
- BS7499 — Static site guarding and mobile patrol
- BS10800 — Provision of security services
- BS7858 — Screening of security personnel
- SIA licensing — Mandatory for all contract security operatives

6. Certified and Non-Certified Teams

One of the most important distinctions in the security dog industry is between certified and non-certified dog teams. This distinction has significant implications for the quality, consistency and accountability of the service you receive.

Understanding the Two-Certificate Structure

NASDU certification involves two separate documents, which serve different purposes. Buyers should understand both and ask to see both.

Certificate 1 — Handler Qualification (HABC)

This certificate is awarded to the handler individually and represents a lifetime achievement. It is issued by Highfield Qualifications (HABC), the awarding body regulated by Ofqual and recognised by the SIA. It confirms that the handler has completed the NASDU Level 2 accredited training programme. This certificate does not expire. However, because it is a record of initial training rather than current operational status, it does not on its own confirm that the handler is currently qualified to deploy with a specific dog.

Certificate 2 — NASDU Team Certificate

This certificate is awarded to the handler and the specific named dog as a pair. It has a 12-month expiry and identifies the dog by name and microchip number. This is the certificate that must be current at the time of deployment. A handler who holds a valid HABC handler certificate but whose team certificate has lapsed is not currently certified to deploy. The team certificate is the operational document; it is the one that matters for your procurement.

Buyers should request both certificates and verify the following:

- The HABC certificate names the handler deploying to your site
- The NASDU team certificate names both the handler and the specific dog being deployed
- The team certificate expiry date is current
- The qualification shown on the team certificate is appropriate for the duties required — General Purpose, not Patrol Only, where search functions are involved

Buyers can verify the current certification status of any team independently using the NASDU certificate checker at www.nasdu.co.uk. This takes only a few minutes and removes reliance on the provider's own assurances.

Buyers should also be aware that for the initial handler qualification, the End Point Assessment (EPA) must be observed by an independent sector competent person who does not have an interest in the learner achieving and who has not been involved with the learner's training. As a minimum, that person must hold a current NASDU Level 2 GP handler qualification and be in date with their own certification. Whilst best practice is that this person is external to the training organisation, the NASDU Code of Practice for Approved Instructors/Trainers permits the independent sector competent person and the Instructor/Trainer to be from the same organisation, provided the above definition of independence is met in full. Buyers can ask providers to confirm that this condition was satisfied for each handler deployed to their site.

What are the risks of using a non-certified team?

A non-certified team has not been independently assessed against recognised standards. This does not necessarily mean the team is incompetent — but it does mean you have no independent verification of their capability. The risks of using a non-certified team include:

- Inability to evidence compliance with BS8517-1 in the event of an incident
- Increased liability exposure for the buyer

- No assurance that the dog is assessed as safe and fit for the intended deployment
- No assurance that the handler and dog have met the required competency standards
- Potential enforcement action if regulatory requirements are not met

Recommendation: Always request evidence that the dog teams proposed for your site hold current certification from a recognised certification body, and confirm that annual reassessment is in place.

7. Selecting a Provider

Selecting the right provider is the most important step in the procurement process. The following criteria should form the basis of your evaluation.

Compliance and accreditation

- Does the provider hold third-party accreditation to a recognised security standard (e.g. BS10800, BS7499)?
- Are they a member of a recognised industry association such as NASDU?
- Are all handlers licensed by the SIA?
- Does the provider demonstrate compliance with BS8517-1?
- Are dogs and handlers annually assessed by a NASDU Approved Trainer and independently certified?
- Are dogs certified fit and vaccinated, and of a recognised breed suitable for GP security work?

Experience and capability

- How long has the provider been operating in the security dog sector?
- Do they have demonstrable experience in environments similar to yours, and can they provide evidence of it?
- Do they have references from comparable clients?
- Can they demonstrate a track record of effective and professional service?

Management and supervision

- Is there a dedicated canine manager or supervisor responsible for operational standards?
- How are handlers supervised and supported during deployment?
- What is the provider's process for replacing a handler or dog at short notice?
- How are incidents and complaints managed?

Buyers should also understand how deployed handlers are supervised on an ongoing basis. A well-run provider will be able to describe how site visits are conducted, how operational standards are monitored during the life of the contract, and what escalation process exists if standards fall short. Supervision arrangements are as much a part of service quality as certification and training records. NASDU member providers are bound by the NASDU Code of Conduct for Membership, which requires members to act with integrity, comply with all relevant legislation and British Standards, and act in a manner consistent with their clients' interests at all times. Buyers can ask whether a provider holds NASDU membership and whether they are familiar with and compliant with the Code of Conduct.

Insurance

A reputable security dog provider should hold appropriate insurance cover, including:

- Public liability insurance (with adequate limits for your deployment)
- Employers' liability insurance
- Cover that specifically includes the use of Security Dogs

You should ask to see evidence of insurance before placing a contract, and you should check that the policy covers the specific activities you are procuring. A standard security guarding policy may not automatically cover the use of dogs. NASDU recommends that the provider's insurance Business Description states "deployment of General Purpose Security Dogs" — a generic security guarding description may not provide adequate cover for dog team deployments. Buyers should ask providers to confirm the scope of their cover before deployment commences.

Financial stability

The security sector has seen a number of provider failures in recent years. Before committing to a contract, particularly a longer-term one, it is reasonable to carry out basic financial due diligence on your proposed provider.

Employment status and PAYE

Buyers should satisfy themselves that the engagement model for handlers deployed to their site is lawful and compliant. HMRC has taken an active interest in employment status arrangements within the security dog sector specifically, and tribunal decisions have consistently found in HMRC's favour where handlers were claimed to be self-employed but were in practice operating under the direction and control of the provider or end client. The financial liability in such cases falls on the provider — but depending on the engagement model, it may also have implications for the buyer. Buyers who are uncertain about the employment status arrangements being offered should take independent advice.

Responsibility for Risk Assessments and Assignment Instructions also depends on the engagement model. Where the buyer engages a security company whose handlers are employed on PAYE, the provider is responsible for the Risk Assessment and Assignment Instructions. Where the buyer directly engages a self-employed handler, the buyer takes on a greater degree of responsibility for ensuring these documents are in place and compliant. Buyers should be clear about which model applies before the contract is signed.

References

Ask for references from clients with comparable requirements to your own. Follow up those references by telephone rather than relying on written testimonials. Ask specific questions about reliability, compliance, incident management and communication.

The team being deployed, not the company

A common assumption in security procurement is that selecting a reputable company is sufficient assurance of quality. In most areas of security that assumption is reasonable. In security dog procurement it is not.

The reason is that certification in the security dog industry is team-specific. It is the individual handler, working with the individual named, microchipped dog, who is assessed and certified. A company may employ twenty handlers, nineteen of whom hold current team certifications — but if the twentieth is the one deployed to your site, that assurance means nothing.

Buyers should therefore focus their due diligence on the specific team proposed for their deployment, not on the company's general compliance record. Ask for the team certificate that names the handler and the dog. Verify it independently. Confirm the qualification level. Check the assessment history. The company's reputation is a starting point, not an answer.

8. Questions to Ask Your Provider

The following questions are recommended as a minimum for any buyer procuring General Purpose Security Dog services. You should expect a reputable provider to be able to answer all of them clearly and with supporting evidence.

Question to ask your provider	What to look for
Are your handlers SIA licensed?	Provider should confirm all handlers hold a current, in-date SIA licence. Verify independently at sia.homeoffice.gov.uk .
Do your dog teams hold current certification?	Provider should confirm that all deployed teams are certified by a recognised independent body and that certifications are in date.
How often are your teams reassessed?	BS8517-1 requires monthly continuation training, quarterly assessments and annual certification as a minimum. Providers should be able to confirm compliance with all three elements and provide records for each.
Are your handlers screened to BS7858?	All security personnel should be screened in accordance with BS7858. Provider should confirm and be able to produce records.
Do you comply with BS8517-1?	Provider should evidence compliance and be able to demonstrate how this is reflected in their operations.
What continuation training do your handlers complete?	Ongoing monthly continuation training is required to maintain competency. Provider should evidence a structured monthly continuation training programme with dated records for each team.
Can you provide a site-specific risk assessment?	A responsible provider should carry out a risk assessment specific to your site before deployment.
Can you provide site-specific Assignment Instructions?	Assignment Instructions define how the dog team will operate on your site. These should be site-specific, not generic.
What insurance do you hold?	Provider should produce evidence of public liability and employers' liability insurance, with confirmation that Security Dogs are included.
What is your dog welfare policy?	Provider should evidence their approach to dog welfare including working hours, rest, veterinary care and retirement.
What vehicles are used to transport and kennel dogs during deployment, and do they meet the requirements of BS8517-1?	Provider should evidence a suitable, purpose-built or manufactured, compliant dog transport/kennel system, with secure compartments, adequate ventilation and temperature control. A provider who cannot demonstrate their vehicle standards, or who transports dogs in standard commercial vehicles without appropriate dog compartments, is not meeting the BS8517-1 requirement.

What records will you provide?	Provider should confirm the records they will supply, including deployment logs, incident reports and assessment certificates.
Who is responsible for canine standards within your organisation?	A well-run provider will have a named individual responsible for canine standards and compliance.
Which qualification does the deployed handler hold — Patrol Only or General Purpose?	If your deployment requires building or person searches, the handler must hold the full GP qualification, not Patrol Only.
Can you confirm the team certificate names both the handler and the specific dog being deployed, and that it is in date?	The team certificate should identify the dog by name and microchip number. Check the expiry date. A lapsed certificate means the team is not currently certified. Buyers should also confirm that the microchip number on the certificate matches the dog physically present on site.
Does your annual assessment evidence monthly refresher training and quarterly assessments throughout the year?	The NASDU assessment form includes a training records section showing 12 months of monthly and quarterly training. A team that cannot evidence this has not met BS8517-1 requirements.
Was the End Point Assessment observed by an independent sector competent person who has no interest in the learner achieving, has not been involved in the learner's training, and holds as a minimum a current NASDU Level 2 GP handler qualification?	The independent sector competent person must have had no involvement in the handler's training and no interest in them achieving. This is a quality assurance requirement.
What is your procedure if the deployed dog is injured, lost or bites a member of the public?	Provider should evidence a documented incident protocol and be able to demonstrate it clearly. This should be included within the Assignment Instructions.
How many dogs does this handler work simultaneously?	One handler working more than one dog can be entirely legitimate, provided every dog deployed under this contract is fully and separately trained and certified as a team with that handler. It is also not unusual for a handler to carry other working dogs — for example drugs or explosives dogs — unrelated to this specific deployment. The concern is not the number or mix of dogs present, but a dog being kept living in a vehicle permanently or for extended periods, without adequate exercise, stimulation or care. Buyers should ask how their provider manages welfare for every dog on the deployment, not only the one actively working.
Who independently audits your operation?	A reputable provider should be able to name their certification body and confirm independent oversight.
What vehicle checks does the provider carry out?	Provider should confirm handlers hold a valid driving licence, and that vehicles used for transport are taxed, insured for business use covering the transport of Security Dogs, and hold a valid MOT where applicable.

Inability or unwillingness to answer any of these questions should be treated as a serious concern about the provider's compliance with industry standards.

As with SIA licence verification, buyers should verify NASDU team certification independently rather than relying solely on copies provided by the supplier. The NASDU certificate checker is available at www.nasdu.co.uk.

9. Welfare and Working Practices

The welfare of the Security Dog is both an ethical and a legal obligation. Under the Animal Welfare Act, all persons responsible for an animal have a duty of care to ensure its needs are met. This duty extends to Security Dogs deployed in a security environment.

As a buyer, you are not directly responsible for the welfare of your provider's dogs. However, you do have a responsibility to ensure that the services you procure are delivered in a manner consistent with welfare requirements, and that you are not indirectly creating conditions that compromise welfare.

Working hours and rest

Security Dogs require adequate rest between periods of deployment. BS8517-1 sets out specific provisions that buyers should be aware of:

- Dogs must receive a minimum of 8 hours undisturbed rest in every 24-hour period
- No dog should work more than 12 hours without that rest period
- Recreational breaks should be at least equal to those prescribed for handlers in the Assignment Instructions
- Dogs should not be fed immediately prior to commencing a working shift or vigorous exercise. Handlers should also take into account prevailing environmental conditions — including extreme heat or cold — when determining the frequency and duration of welfare breaks. The welfare of the dog is ultimately the handler's responsibility at all times.

Buyers should not specify deployment patterns that would require dogs to be worked in excess of these welfare guidelines. Shift patterns should allow for proper rest between deployments, and dogs should have access to water and appropriate shelter during deployment.

The Guard Dogs Act

The Guard Dogs Act requires that warning signs are displayed at every entrance to premises where a guard dog is in use. BS8517-1 extends this recommendation to exit points also. Buyers should confirm with their provider that appropriate signage will be in place at all entry and exit points, including any known informal access points or shortcuts used by staff or the public, before deployment commences. The absence of warning signs is not a minor administrative oversight — it is a breach of a statutory legal requirement.

The Guard Dogs Act places specific legal obligations on the occupier of premises where a guard dog is used. Buyers and site occupiers should be aware of these obligations, as they apply regardless of whether the dog handler is employed directly or engaged through a security contractor.

The key requirements of the Act are as follows. A guard dog must not be used at premises unless a handler is present and capable of controlling the dog at all times — a dog left to roam freely without a handler is in breach of the Act. Where a guard dog is not under the direct control of the handler at a particular moment, the dog must be secured so that it is not free to roam the premises. Warning notices must be clearly displayed at every entrance to the premises before and during the deployment.

The occupier of the premises — that is, the buyer or client — carries responsibilities under the Act, not only the handler or the security company. A buyer who procures a guard dog deployment without ensuring these requirements are met may be in breach of the Act regardless of the provider's own arrangements. Buyers should confirm before deployment commences that warning signage is in place at all entry and exit points, that the dog will be under handler control at all times during operational deployment, and that the deployment model does not involve the dog being left unsecured and unattended.

The Guard Dogs Act applies in England, Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland has equivalent provisions under the Guard Dogs Act (Northern Ireland). The full text of the Act is available at www.legislation.gov.uk.

Veterinary care

A responsible provider will ensure that all Security Dogs are registered with a veterinary practice, are up to date with vaccinations and health checks, and receive prompt veterinary attention when required. All Security Dogs should have an annual fitness for duty certificate issued by a veterinary surgeon confirming the dog is fit for work and deployment. Handlers should be able to produce this certificate on request. Buyers may wish to ask providers to confirm their approach to veterinary care and to evidence annual fitness for duty certification as part of their due diligence.

Transport and vehicle requirements

The transport of Security Dogs is subject to both legal requirements and the specific provisions of BS8517-1. Buyers may not consider vehicle standards to be a procurement concern, but transport conditions directly affect both the welfare of the dog and its readiness to work on arrival at a deployment. A dog that has been transported in inadequate conditions — insufficient space, poor ventilation, extreme temperatures — is not in an appropriate state to begin operational duties.

BS8517-1 sets out the following requirements for vehicles used to transport security dogs:

- The vehicle must be fit for purpose and suitable for the safe transportation of dogs
- Dogs must be transported in secure, purpose-built cages or compartments that prevent the dog from moving freely around the vehicle whilst in transit
- The compartment must provide adequate space for the dog to stand, turn around and lie down in a natural position
- Adequate ventilation must be provided at all times, including when the vehicle is stationary
- The vehicle must be capable of maintaining a safe temperature for the dog in all weather conditions — this includes both heating in cold weather and effective ventilation or cooling in hot weather
- Dogs must not be left unattended in vehicles in conditions that could compromise their welfare, particularly in warm weather when the temperature inside a stationary vehicle can rise rapidly to dangerous levels
- Fresh water must be available to the dog during transportation
- The vehicle should carry contact details for the handler and the provider in case of emergency
- The vehicle must be taxed, hold a valid MOT where applicable, and be insured for business use covering the transport of Security Dogs — a standard social/domestic insurance policy is unlikely to provide cover, and buyers should ask providers to confirm this explicitly

Buyers should ask providers to evidence their transport arrangements and confirm that their vehicles meet these requirements. A provider who cannot demonstrate their vehicle standards, or who acknowledges that dogs are transported in standard commercial vehicles without purpose-built dog compartments, is not meeting the BS8517-1 standard.

Vehicle standards are also relevant to on-site kennelling. Where a dog is kennelled in a vehicle at or near the deployment site during rest periods, the same standards of space, ventilation and temperature control apply. A dog resting in a vehicle between patrol duties must have conditions that allow genuine rest and recovery.

Kennelling a dog permanently or long-term in a vehicle is not acceptable practice. However, it is recognised that handlers working away from home on extended operational deployments may use a suitably equipped vehicle as temporary accommodation for both handler and dog, provided the vehicle fully meets the welfare requirements set out above. The acceptability of this arrangement depends on the quality of the provision, not the duration. A properly equipped vehicle with adequate space, ventilation and temperature control, where the handler is present and the dog receives appropriate rest, exercise and care, meets the welfare standard regardless of how many nights are involved. What is not acceptable is a dog left alone in a vehicle for extended periods, or a vehicle used as a permanent substitute for proper kennelling because the provider has not invested in appropriate facilities.

The Five Freedoms (Needs of a Dog)

The welfare of working animals in the United Kingdom is underpinned by a framework known as the Five Freedoms. Originally developed for farm animals, the Five Freedoms are now widely applied to all animals in human care, including Security Dogs, and are embedded in the Animal Welfare Act. They provide a practical framework for assessing whether an animal's welfare needs are being met.

The Five Freedoms are:

- **Freedom from hunger and thirst** — by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour
- **Freedom from discomfort** — by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area
- **Freedom from pain, injury or disease** — by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment
- **Freedom to express normal behaviour** — by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and the company of the animal's own kind
- **Freedom from fear and distress** — by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering

Buyers do not need to assess a provider's compliance with the Five Freedoms in technical detail. However, an awareness of this framework helps buyers recognise when working conditions described by a provider — or observed on site — fall below acceptable standards. A dog that is routinely transported in inadequate vehicles, denied adequate rest, worked while visibly unwell, or kept in conditions that prevent normal behaviour is being managed in breach of both the Five Freedoms and the Animal Welfare Act.

A provider who is familiar with the Five Freedoms and can explain how they are applied in their operation is demonstrating a level of welfare awareness that buyers should expect. A provider who is unfamiliar with the framework, or dismissive of it, is providing an indication of their overall approach to animal welfare. The DEFRA Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs provides further statutory guidance on meeting these welfare obligations. It is worth noting that the Five Freedoms are now more commonly referred to in welfare guidance as the "needs of a dog" — reflecting a shift from a freedoms-based framework to a needs-based one. Both describe the same underlying welfare obligations and buyers may encounter either term in provider documentation or industry literature.

Identification — collar, tag and microchip

Every security dog must wear a collar with an ID tag displaying the owner's name, address and postcode whilst in a public place or place of public resort. Security dogs are not specifically exempt from the Control of Dogs Order. NASDU also recommends that a contact telephone number is included on the tag to allow rapid contact with the handler in the event the dog is lost. In Northern Ireland, all dogs must additionally hold a dog licence, and guard dogs require a kennel licence.

All dogs in the UK are required to be microchipped and registered on a government-approved database. The microchip must be registered to the current owner at their current address. Dogs imported from overseas must be re-registered to a UK database. The NASDU team certificate identifies the dog by name and microchip number — buyers should confirm that the microchip number on the certificate matches the dog physically present on their site.

Retirement and rehoming

Security Dogs have a finite operational career. A responsible provider will have a clear policy for the retirement and rehoming of dogs that are no longer fit for operational duty. This is an indicator of a provider's overall approach to welfare and ethical practice.

10. Continuation Training and Annual Assessments

Initial certification is only the starting point. The maintenance of standards in a Security Dog team requires structured, ongoing continuation training and quarterly assessments. This is one of the areas where standards can slip without buyers being aware, and it is one of the most important areas to scrutinise during procurement.

The full training cycle

BS8517-1 specifies a three-tier training and assessment cycle that all certified teams are expected to maintain:

- **Monthly** — continuation training sessions, recorded and documented as per BS8517-1 and the NASDU Trainer's Code of Practice 2022. These sessions cover the skills required at certification and must be documented by a qualified Instructor/Trainer. Under the NASDU Code of Practice for Approved Instructors/Trainers, training records must be signed by both the Instructor/Trainer and the handler and retained by the Instructor/Trainer for a minimum of five years. Handlers are required to retain their own continuation training records for a minimum of 12 months or until annual certification is achieved. A provider who cannot produce signed, dated monthly training records has not met this standard.
- **Quarterly** — formal assessment of the team against defined criteria as per BS8517-1. These are structured assessments, not informal training sessions, and the outcomes must be recorded.
- **Annually** — full operational team assessment and certification. This results in the renewal of the NASDU team certificate and is carried out by a recognised NASDU Approved Trainer in the GP discipline.

Critically, the annual assessment form itself includes a training records section that must show evidence of all 12 months of monthly training and all three quarterly assessments completed during the year, with the annual certification assessment serving as the fourth assessment in the cycle. A team that cannot produce this evidence has not met the standard — even if they hold a current certificate. Buyers should ask providers whether this evidence exists and is available for inspection.

A team that fails its annual assessment should be withdrawn from operational duties until the deficiency has been identified, rectified and the team has been formally reassessed and passed. Buyers should include a contractual requirement for providers to notify them immediately if any deployed team fails or is withdrawn from assessment.

Assessment quality and independence

A certificate confirms that a team has been through an assessment process against a defined set of criteria. It does not, by itself, guarantee the rigour with which those criteria were applied. Two teams can hold identical certificates having been assessed to different standards depending on the assessor. Buyers who want assurance above the minimum should look beyond the certificate itself — a consistent, well-documented record of monthly continuation training and quarterly assessments tells a more complete story than the end certificate alone. The NASDU Code of Practice for Approved Instructors/Trainers sets out the specific competency, documentation and independence requirements that NASDU Approved Trainers must meet. Buyers may wish to confirm that the trainer responsible for their deployed handler's qualification and continuation training holds current NASDU Approved Trainer status.

Buyers may also wish to ask whether the team's quarterly and annual assessments have been conducted by a range of independent trainers. A variety of trainers across the assessment history is an indicator of transparency and objectivity. Where the same trainer has conducted all assessments over an extended period, it is reasonable to ask what steps have been taken to ensure independence. This is not an accusation — it is a straightforward due diligence question that a well-run provider will have no difficulty answering.

Where the nature or scale of a deployment warrants additional assurance, buyers may consider commissioning an independent subject matter expert to conduct a baseline assessment or dip test of the proposed teams prior to deployment. This sits entirely outside the provider's own assessment and certification history and gives the buyer direct, objective assurance of the team's operational standard.

NASDU Inspectorate Oversight

NASDU operates an active Inspectorate oversight programme covering all Initial Course End Point Assessments leading to NASDU certification. Approved Trainers are required to notify NASDU in advance of Initial Course End Point Assessments, and NASDU's Inspectorate carries out unannounced spot checks to verify that assessments are being conducted correctly, fairly and consistently across the UK. Buyers can take confidence from this that NASDU certification is not simply a paper exercise — it is backed by an active quality assurance programme that directly verifies the assessment process itself.

Requesting training and assessment records

It is entirely reasonable for buyers to request sight of training and assessment records for the teams deployed to their site. A provider that is unable or unwilling to provide this information should be viewed with caution. Records should include:

- Training logs showing dates, activities and outcomes for monthly sessions
- Records of quarterly assessments
- Annual assessment certificates showing the team assessed, the assessor, the date and the outcome
- Evidence of SIA licence validity for each deployed handler

Good practice: Include a contractual requirement for your provider to supply annual copies of assessment certificates for all teams deployed to your site, and to notify you promptly if any deployed team fails their reassessment or is withdrawn from deployment for any reason.

11. Documentation and Records

A well-run security dog operation is supported by a clear documentation framework. Good documentation protects both the provider and the client, provides evidence of compliance, and supports effective incident management. Buyers should be aware of the key documents they should expect to see.

Assignment Instructions

Assignment Instructions are a fundamental requirement for any security deployment. They define, in site-specific terms, how the security team is to operate. For a dog team deployment, Assignment Instructions should include:

- The scope of the deployment (areas to be covered, hours of operation)
- Specific duties and responsibilities of the handler
- Procedures for handling specific incidents (including dog injury, loss, or a bite incident)
- Emergency procedures, including evacuation
- Welfare provisions for the dog
- Contact procedures for supervision and management
- Any site-specific restrictions on the use of the dog

BS8517-1 requires that Assignment Instructions for dog team deployments include three specific items in addition to the standard BS7499 requirements:

- A risk assessment relevant to the use of the dog on that specific site
- Arrangements for the health, safety and welfare of the dog during the deployment
- A list of emergency veterinary practices in the area

The emergency vet requirement is the item most commonly overlooked by providers. Buyers should specifically check that it is included in the Assignment Instructions before deployment commences.

Assignment Instructions should be site-specific. Generic Assignment Instructions that are not tailored to your site are a warning indicator. You should ask to review the Assignment Instructions before deployment commences and at each contract renewal.

To help buyers understand what compliant Assignment Instructions look like in practice, the following describes the key differences between a compliant document and a generic one.

A compliant set of Assignment Instructions will name the specific site, include the address and a description of the areas to be covered, identify the handler by name, describe the patrol routes or search areas relevant to that site, and set out the specific procedures to be followed in the event of common incidents on that site. They will include the three items required by BS8517-1 set out above.

A generic set of Assignment Instructions will refer to “the site” without naming it, describe duties in broad terms that could apply to any deployment, and omit site-specific detail. They may include the BS8517-1 required items in template form — for example, a blank space where the emergency vet details should appear — without those items having been completed. A document of this kind has not been prepared for your deployment; it has been adapted from a template with minimal effort.

Buyers should ask to review the Assignment Instructions before deployment commences. If the document does not name your site, describe your specific operational requirements, and include completed details for all three required items above, it should be returned to the provider for revision before deployment begins.

Risk Assessments

A site-specific risk assessment should be carried out before a dog team is deployed to any new site. The risk assessment should consider:

- Hazards present on the site that may affect the dog or handler
- The presence of members of the public and their vulnerability
- Environmental factors such as lighting, terrain and weather
- The potential for the dog to come into contact with other animals
- Control measures required to mitigate identified risks

The risk assessment should be documented and available for inspection. It should be reviewed at regular intervals and updated following any significant change to the site or operational requirements.

Deployment records

For each deployment, the provider should maintain records that confirm:

- The identity of the handler and dog on duty
- The hours worked
- Any incidents that occurred during the deployment
- Any welfare concerns noted

The NASDU team certificate identifies the specific dog by name and microchip number. Buyers should verify that the dog physically present on their site matches the dog named on the current

team certificate. A provider deploying a different dog from the one named, and microchip number recorded, on the certificate is in breach of the certification framework. If a dog is replaced during the contract — for any reason — a new team certificate should be obtained before the replacement dog is deployed.

Under the NASDU Trainer's Code of Practice, training records must be retained by the Instructor/Trainer for a minimum of five years. Handlers are required to retain their own continuation training records for a minimum of 12 months or until annual certification is achieved. Buyers may wish to include record retention as a contractual requirement to ensure records remain available in the event of a later dispute or incident investigation.

Incident reports

Any incident involving the use of force by a security dog and handler should be subject to a formal incident report. This report should be provided to the client promptly and retained by the provider. Buyers should ask providers to confirm their incident reporting procedures and should include incident reporting requirements in their contract. Buyers should also ask their provider to confirm that a dog incident policy is in place. This document should set out the procedures to be followed in the event of a dog-related incident — including bite incidents, dog escapes, welfare emergencies and any situation in which the dog's behaviour gives rise to concern. Where a provider does not have their own dog incident policy, the NASDU dog incident policy is available as a best practice reference. Buyers should satisfy themselves that any deployed team is operating under a defined incident policy before deployment commences.

Supply Chain Responsibility

Buyers should ensure that the Tier 1 company they directly engage takes full responsibility for all legal documentation obligations associated with the deployment. This includes Risk Assessments, Assignment Instructions, warning signs and any other compliance documentation required under the relevant legislation and British Standards. These obligations should not be delegated further down the supply chain. Where a principal contractor subcontracts the dog team service, accountability for compliance documentation remains with the company the buyer has contracted with directly. Buyers should confirm this explicitly in their contract and should not accept assurances that documentation obligations have been passed to a subcontractor.

12. Common Procurement Mistakes

The following mistakes are among the most commonly observed in the procurement of security dog services. Being aware of them will help you avoid them.

Buying on price alone

Security dog services have an inherent cost floor that reflects the legitimate expenses of training, certification, welfare, insurance and ongoing assessment. A price that is significantly below market rate should prompt questions about where costs are being cut. The consequences of procuring a non-compliant service can far exceed any short-term cost saving. UKSICA (United Kingdom Security Industry Compliance Association) uksica.org is an industry-led compliance organisation for the UK security sector, operating on the principles of ethical labour, transparency, compliance and risk prevention. UKSICA provides a range of compliance tools and resources designed to support security businesses, buyers and procurement professionals in understanding and meeting their obligations. Of particular relevance to buyers of security dog services is UKSICA's Pricing and Compliance Calculator, available at uksica.org/charge-rate-calculator. This tool helps buyers and providers understand the difference between a handler's hourly wage and the true cost of employment once statutory obligations are included. Using the current National Living Wage as a baseline, the calculator demonstrates that the minimum employment cost, once National Insurance, pension contributions, holiday pay and sick pay are factored in, is approximately 32% higher than the headline wage figure alone. The calculator uksica.org/charge-rate-calculator includes a dedicated K9 Security Dogs section, which recognises the additional costs associated

with operating a compliant dog team, including handler costs, training, kennelling, veterinary expenses, insurance and equipment. This makes it a practical reference point for any buyer seeking to understand why compliant security dog services carry a higher cost than standard guarding, and why unusually low pricing should prompt scrutiny rather than acceptance. Buyers are encouraged to use the UKSICA calculator as part of their procurement due diligence. uksica.org

Failing to verify SIA licence status

It takes only a few minutes to verify an SIA licence using the SIA licence checker. Buyers who fail to carry out this check leave themselves exposed. A handler deployed without a valid SIA licence is operating illegally. The buyer, as well as the provider, may face consequences.

Accepting generic Assignment Instructions and Risk Assessments

Site-specific Assignment Instructions and Risk Assessments are not bureaucratic formalities — they are essential operational documents. Accepting generic, templated documents that have not been tailored to your site means that the handler may not have the specific guidance they need to operate safely and effectively, and that risks specific to your site may not have been identified or mitigated.

Not requesting certification evidence

Many buyers assume that a provider's assurances of compliance are sufficient. They are not. You should request and retain copies of current assessment certificates for all deployed teams. If a provider is unable or unwilling to provide this evidence, you should reconsider whether they are the right choice.

Deploying a Patrol Only team for a role requiring search

There are two qualification levels within the GP category. A handler holding the Patrol Dog Only qualification is trained and assessed to patrol buildings and open areas, and the dog will indicate on a concealed person encountered during that patrol. What the Patrol Dog Only qualification does not cover is a formal, tasked search for a known or suspected concealed person, or a search for discarded or hidden property following an incident. Buyers who do not establish which qualification the handler holds may unknowingly deploy a team whose qualification does not match their operational requirement. Where a formal search capability is required, the handler must hold the full General Purpose Security Dog qualification.

Treating the handler certificate as evidence of current certification

The HABC handler certificate is a lifetime achievement award and does not expire. It confirms that the handler completed their initial training, but it does not confirm the current status of the team. The document that matters for operational deployment is the NASDU team certificate, which expires annually and is specific to the handler and their named dog. Buyers who accept a handler certificate as sufficient evidence of current certification, without asking to see the team certificate, are not adequately verifying compliance.

Ignoring welfare considerations

Welfare is not just an ethical consideration; it is a legal one. Buyers who specify deployment patterns that are inconsistent with welfare requirements, or who fail to take action when welfare concerns are raised, may face legal exposure under the Animal Welfare Act. Welfare failings also carry a reputational risk for the procuring organisation. If welfare or safety concerns involving Security Dogs deployed at a buyer's premises become known to the public, the reputational consequences for the buyer can be significant — regardless of whether the provider was directly at fault. Buyers should satisfy themselves that the welfare standards of any provider they engage are ones they would be comfortable defending publicly.

Failing to include key requirements in the contract

A verbal assurance is not a contractual requirement. Ensure that your contract includes explicit requirements covering: SIA licence verification, certification and annual reassessment, site-specific Assignment Instructions and risk assessments, incident reporting, and welfare standards.

Not reviewing the contract

Security requirements change. A contract that was fit for purpose when it was written may no longer reflect your current needs. Contracts should be reviewed at regular intervals, and providers should be required to update Assignment Instructions and risk assessments whenever the site or operational requirements change significantly.

13. Red Flags

The following red flags, individually or in combination, should prompt buyers to seek clarification or reconsider a provider. They are not proof of non-compliance but they are patterns that experienced procurement managers and industry regulators recognise as associated with poor practice.

Unable to produce a current NASDU team certificate

A provider who cannot produce a current, in-date team certificate for the specific handler and dog being deployed has not demonstrated that the team is certified. A handler certificate (HABC) is not a substitute. Inability to produce the team certificate should be treated as a significant compliance concern.

Certification evidence provided only in summary form

A provider who offers a summary spreadsheet or verbal assurance of certification status rather than the actual certificates is not meeting the standard of transparency expected. Buyers should always ask to see the certificates themselves, and should verify independently using the NASDU certificate checker at www.nasdu.co.uk.

No evidence of continuation training

A provider who cannot demonstrate that their teams have completed monthly continuation training and quarterly assessments throughout the year has not met BS8517-1 requirements, regardless of whether they hold a current annual certificate. Ask to see the training records, not just the certificate.

Generic Assignment Instructions

Assignment Instructions that are not specific to your site, that do not name the site or address its particular characteristics, or that omit the three items required by BS8517-1 (site-specific risk assessment, welfare arrangements, emergency vet list) are a warning sign. Generic documents suggest the provider is not operating to the required standard.

Unusually low pricing

Security dog services have a cost floor that reflects training, certification, welfare, insurance and ongoing assessment. HMRC has formally identified the legitimate cost components of a compliant security dog operation as including the purchase of the dog, food and dietary needs, veterinary care, training, equipment, insurance and travel (as set out in HMRC guidance on employment status in the security dog sector). A price that does not reflect these components is not explained by efficiency — it is more commonly explained by the omission of one or more of them. Buyers should ask how the price has been arrived at and satisfy themselves that the quoted rate is consistent with a fully compliant operation.

Reluctance to answer questions

A provider who is evasive, vague or unwilling to answer the questions set out in the Questions to Ask section of this guide should be treated with caution. Reputable providers welcome scrutiny because their compliance record is an asset. Reluctance to engage with detailed questions is itself a red flag.

Inability to confirm the specific dog being deployed

If a provider cannot confirm in advance which dog will be deployed to your site, or cannot produce a team certificate that names a specific dog, they cannot demonstrate that a certified team will be in place. The identity of the dog matters because certification is team-specific, not handler-specific.

No named individual responsible for canine standards

A well-run provider will have a named person with responsibility for canine standards and compliance. An organisation that cannot identify who holds this responsibility is unlikely to have robust oversight of its operations.

Inadequate or non-compliant transport arrangements

A provider who cannot evidence how their dogs are transported, or whose vehicles do not meet the requirements of BS8517-1, is failing a basic welfare and compliance obligation. Transport standards are not optional and inadequate arrangements are an indicator of wider welfare shortcomings.

Poor on-site presentation

A handler who arrives in an unkempt or incomplete uniform, with a dog in poor condition, or whose vehicle is untidy, dirty or visibly ill-equipped for dog transport, is giving you visible evidence of their standards. Presentation is not a cosmetic concern; it is a reliable indicator of the care and professionalism applied to less visible aspects of the operation. A well-run provider will ensure that the handler is correctly uniformed and identifiable as a dog handler, that the dog is clean, well-groomed and in good condition, and that the vehicle and its kennelling system reflect the same standard of care.

None of these indicators is conclusive on its own. Where multiple warning signs are identified, buyers should seek further clarification before proceeding. A reputable provider will welcome the opportunity to address concerns directly.

Note: If during a deployment you observe behaviour that you believe may indicate poor welfare — for example, a dog that appears distressed, malnourished or injured — you should raise this with the provider immediately and, if necessary, report it to NASDU and the RSPCA or your local authority animal welfare officer.

14. Buyer Checklist

Use this checklist to guide your procurement process and to verify compliance before and during deployment. This checklist is designed to be printed and used as a standalone reference document.

Before you go to market	
☐	I have defined my requirement in writing, including site details, hours, objectives and known hazards.
☐	I understand the relevant British Standards (BS8517, BS7499, BS10800, BS7858).
☐	I have set a realistic budget that reflects the true cost of a compliant service.
Evaluating providers	
☐	I have asked all providers to confirm compliance with BS8517-1.
☐	I have verified SIA licence status for all proposed handlers at sia.homeoffice.gov.uk .
☐	I have requested evidence of current certification for all proposed dog teams.
☐	I have confirmed that annual reassessment is in place.
☐	I have asked providers to confirm that handlers are screened to BS7858.
☐	I have requested evidence of public liability and employers' liability insurance, including cover for Security Dogs.
☐	I have taken up references from comparable clients.
☐	I have confirmed which qualification the deployed handler holds (Patrol Only or General Purpose) and verified it matches the duties required.
☐	I have requested the NASDU team certificate (not just the handler's HABC certificate) and confirmed it is in date.
☐	I have confirmed the team certificate identifies the specific dog by name and microchip number.
☐	I have confirmed that the End Point Assessment was observed by an independent sector competent person who has no interest in the learner achieving, has not been involved in the learner's training, and holds as a minimum a current NASDU Level 2 GP handler qualification.
☐	I have independently verified the team's current NASDU certification status at www.nasdu.co.uk .
Before deployment commences	
☐	I have reviewed and approved site-specific Assignment Instructions.
☐	I have reviewed and approved a site-specific risk assessment.
☐	I have confirmed welfare provisions including working hours, rest, water and shelter.
☐	I have agreed incident reporting procedures with my provider.
☐	I have confirmed that appropriate warning signs will be displayed at all entry and exit points.

☐	I have confirmed the Assignment Instructions include a list of emergency veterinary practices in the area.
☐	I have asked the provider to explain how they apply the Five Freedoms to their Security Dogs and am satisfied with their response.
☐	I have confirmed that the provider's vehicles meet the transport requirements of BS8517-1, including adequate space, ventilation, temperature control and secure dog compartments.
During the contract	
☐	I carry out periodic verification of SIA licence status for deployed handlers.
☐	I request updated certification evidence at each annual reassessment.
☐	I review Assignment Instructions and risk assessments at regular intervals and following any significant site change.
☐	I review incident reports promptly and follow up any concerns with my provider.
☐	I monitor welfare on site and raise any concerns promptly.
☐	I verify that the dog physically present on site matches the dog named on the current team certificate, and matches the microchip number.
☐	I confirm that monthly and quarterly training records are being maintained and are available on request.

Quick Reference: Before Procuring a GP Security Dog Team

A compliant provider should be able to demonstrate:

- ✓ SIA licensed handlers
- ✓ Current NASDU team certification (handler + dog named)
- ✓ Monthly continuation training records
- ✓ Quarterly independent assessments
- ✓ Annual independent team assessment and recertification
- ✓ Site-specific Assignment Instructions
- ✓ Site-specific risk assessments
- ✓ Appropriate insurance
- ✓ BS8517-1 compliance
- ✓ Appropriate welfare arrangements

Warning Signs — seek clarification if you see:

- X Cannot produce current team certificate
- X No evidence of continuation training
- X Generic Assignment Instructions (not site-specific)
- X Unusually low pricing
- X Unable to identify the specific dog being deployed
- X Certification provided in summary form only
- X Reluctance to answer detailed questions
- X No named person responsible for canine standards
- X Poor handler presentation or dog condition on site

Verify all certification independently at www.nasdu.co.uk before deployment commences.

15. Further Information

The following organisations and resources can provide further guidance on the standards, regulatory requirements and best practices covered in this guide.

Organisation / Resource	Details
NASDU (National Association of Security Dog Users)	The longest established and largest industry association for security dog users in the UK. Provides certification, assessment and guidance for the security dog sector. Includes a publicly accessible certificate checker to verify current team certification status. www.nasdu.co.uk
Security Industry Authority (SIA)	The regulatory body for the private security industry. Provides information on SIA licensing and the licence checker tool. www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk
BSI (British Standards Institution)	Publisher of BS8517, BS7499, BS10800 and BS7858. Standards are available for purchase from the BSI. NASDU is an authorised BSI Distributor and BS Standards are also available direct from NASDU. www.bsigroup.com www.nasdu.co.uk
Highfield Qualifications (HABC)	The awarding body for the NASDU Level 2 General Purpose Security Dog Handler qualification. Regulated by Ofqual and recognised by the SIA. www.highfieldqualifications.com
NPSA (National Protective Security Authority)	Provides guidance on detection dog services and wider security topics. www.npsa.gov.uk

SIA 'Do You Buy Security?' Buyer's Guide	A broader buyer's guide to procuring security services, published by the SIA. www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk
Animal Welfare Act	The primary legislation governing the welfare of animals in the United Kingdom, including Security Dogs. The Five Freedoms framework referenced throughout this guide is embedded within the Act and provides the practical standard against which Security Dog welfare is assessed. www.legislation.gov.uk
Dangerous Dogs Act	Legislation governing the control of dogs, relevant to security dog deployments. www.legislation.gov.uk
UKSICA (United Kingdom Security Industry Compliance Association) uksica.org	An independent, industry-led compliance organisation for the UK private security sector, operating on the principles of ethical labour, transparency, compliance and risk prevention. Provides a Pricing and Compliance Calculator including a dedicated K9 Security Dogs section to help buyers understand the true cost of a compliant service. www.uksica.org uksica.org/charge-rate-calculator
Guard Dogs Act	Primary legislation governing the use of guard dogs at premises in England, Scotland and Wales. Sets out handler control requirements, secure dog requirements and mandatory warning signage obligations. www.legislation.gov.uk
S12 Security Guarding Leadership Group	Industry leadership group working with government and the Security Minister to address critical industry issues, promote higher standards and enhance public safety. Includes a buyer education workstream. www.securityleaders.co.uk
NASDU Approved Trainers Code of Practice	The Code of Practice governing NASDU Approved Instructors/Trainers. Sets out the standards of conduct, competency and integrity required of trainers approved to deliver NASDU accredited training programmes. Covers administration, training standards, dog and handler suitability, assessment independence, welfare and documentation requirements. Buyers may wish to confirm that any trainer involved in the qualification of their deployed handler holds current NASDU Approved Trainer status. www.nasdu.co.uk
NASDU Code of Conduct for Membership	The ethical and compliance framework applicable to all grades of NASDU membership. Requires members to act with integrity, comply with all relevant legislation (including the Guard Dogs Act, Animal Welfare Act and Dangerous Dogs Act), comply with applicable British Standards, and uphold NASDU's Codes of Practice. Buyers can use NASDU membership status as one indicator of a provider's commitment to industry standards and ethical conduct. www.nasdu.co.uk

If you have questions about this guide or about NASDU's certification and assessment processes, please contact NASDU directly via the website at www.nasdu.co.uk.

About this guide

This guide has been produced by NASDU (National Association of Security Dog Users) as a public information resource for buyers of General Purpose Security Dog services. It does not constitute legal advice, and buyers should take independent legal or professional advice as appropriate to their specific circumstances.

This guide does not endorse or recommend any specific provider, product or service. References to British Standards are provided for information purposes only; buyers should obtain copies of the relevant standards from BSI for full guidance.

NASDU is not responsible for the actions of any provider and cannot guarantee the compliance of any provider with the standards referenced in this guide.

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