Seven questions to ask any close protection company — including us.

Before engaging any UK security firm, ask: Can I see officer SIA licence numbers? What vetting standard do you screen to? Can I see your insurance certificate? Who exactly turns up — and is that who I met? What happens if I need to cancel? Will you tell me if I need less than I've asked for? And who else will know I'm a client? A serious firm answers all seven without flinching: licence numbers handed over on the spot, checkable free on the SIA's public register; a named vetting standard — BS 7858 — not vague talk of background checks; an insurance certificate in writing, with £5m public liability the credible benchmark; the same named operatives from first conversation to deployment; cancellation terms stated plainly before you sign; the "less than you've asked for" question met with visible relief; and confidentiality that is contractual, not promised. We publish our own answers on our Credentials page — exactly where you should expect to find them.

What a good answer sounds like — question by question

1. Can I see officer SIA licence numbers?

Good answer: Numbers handed over immediately, checkable free on the SIA's public register.

Red flag: Hesitation, or an answer that avoids the actual number.

The licence belongs to the individual, so this question also reveals whether the firm actually knows who it is sending you. Sixteen digits, one minute on the register — the cheapest due diligence in this market, and the one unlicensed suppliers cannot survive.

2. What vetting standard do you screen to?

Good answer: BS 7858, named without prompting — the full screening standard: work history, residency, finances, criminal record.

Red flag: A vague reference to "background checks" with no named standard.

A named standard is auditable; "we vet everyone thoroughly" is not. BS 7858 exists precisely so that screening has a definition — a firm that can name it has probably done it, and a firm that cannot has probably improvised.

3. Can I see your insurance certificate?

Good answer: Produced without fuss; public liability of £5m is the credible benchmark.

Red flag: A verbal assurance instead of paperwork.

If something goes wrong on a detail, the insurance is what stands between you and the consequences. A certificate takes a serious firm thirty seconds to produce — reluctance means it is expensive, lapsed, or imaginary.

4. Who exactly turns up — and is that who I met?

Good answer: Named, senior operatives, consistent from the first conversation through to deployment.

Red flag: "Someone from the team" with no continuity promised.

Much of the industry sells the senior person in the meeting and staffs the job from a roster. Continuity is not a luxury: an officer who knows your household, your routes and your preferences is materially safer than a stranger holding a briefing sheet.

5. What happens if I need to cancel?

Good answer: Clear terms, stated plainly, before you sign anything.

Red flag: No answer until after the contract is signed.

How a firm handles the question tells you how it handles paperwork generally. Plans change in this work constantly — a supplier whose terms only appear after signature is planning to profit from that, not accommodate it.

6. Will you tell me if I need less than I've asked for?

Good answer: A firm answer of yes, with visible relief rather than reluctance.

Red flag: A hard sell toward the largest package regardless of what you described.

This is the fastest honesty test available. A firm that will recommend less earns the right to be believed when it recommends more — and one whose every assessment lands on the biggest option has told you what its assessments are for.

7. And who else will know I'm a client?

Good answer: Nobody — confidentiality assumed and contractual, not just promised.

Red flag: Casual name-dropping of other clients, even anonymised ones.

Discretion shown to other clients is the discretion you will get. A firm that hints at famous names to impress you is auditioning with someone else's privacy — and one day the name in the anecdote will be yours.

Our licensing, vetting and registration details are on our Credentials page; ask us the other questions directly.

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Written by the founder, First Class Executive Security

30+ YEARS IN THE SECURITY INDUSTRY, 20+ IN CLOSE PROTECTION

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