



WHITEPAPER

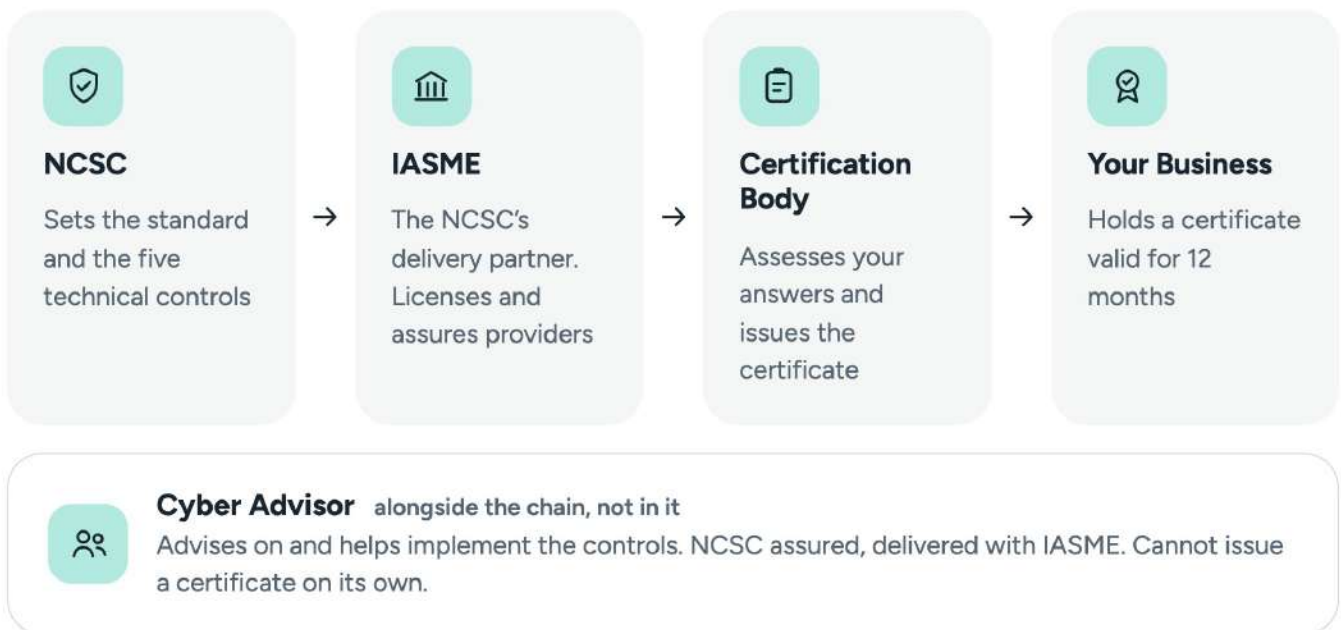
The SME *Buyer's* *Guide*

How to Choose a Cyber Essentials Certification
Body

01 · THE SCHEME

Who Does What in Cyber Essentials

Cyber Essentials is a government-backed scheme. Knowing who sits where makes it far easier to choose a provider, and to spot one that is overselling.



215k+

Cyber Essentials certificates awarded, 49,248 of them in the 12 months to March 2026

Source: GOV.UK, March 2026

12

months before both Cyber Essentials and Cyber Essentials Plus certificates expire

Source: IASME, Cyber Essentials FAQs

£20m

UK organisations under this turnover that certify their whole organisation are entitled to cyber liability insurance arranged by IASME.

Source: NCSC, Cyber Essentials

02 · ADVISOR OR CERTIFIER?

Cyber Advisor or Certification Body?

The two are often confused. One helps you get ready. The other certifies that you are. Knowing which you need can save money and weeks.

	 Cyber Advisor Prepares you	 Certification Body Certifies you
What they do	Reviews your set-up and helps you put the five controls in place	Assesses your answers and issues the certificate
Who stands behind them	NCSC assured, delivered with IASME	Licensed and assured by IASME
Can they certify you?	No, unless the firm is also a Certification Body	Yes, through a qualified assessor
Best when	Controls are missing or unclear and IT help is thin	Controls are in place and you are ready to certify
Can one firm do both?	Yes, where the firm is also a Certification Body	Yes. Certification Bodies may also offer consulting

Source: IASME, "What is the difference between an Assessor and an Advisor?" and Cyber Advisor FAQs.

Which Do You Need?

Start with an advisor if

You are unsure what is in scope, or devices, MFA or patching need fixing before you can answer the questions honestly.

Go straight to certification if

Your IT already meets the five controls and you or your IT partner understand the requirements.

Which-do-you-need guidance is NetMonkeys' view.

No

A Cyber Advisor cannot issue your certificate unless the firm is also a Certification Body. You apply for certification separately.

Source: IASME, NCSC Cyber Advisor FAQs

03 · THE OFFICIAL LIST

Where to Find the Official List

Anyone can claim to offer Cyber Essentials. Only a licensed Certification Body can issue it. Check the source, not the sales page.

**IASME: Find a Certification Body**

The official map and list of licensed providers, which can be filtered by certification level. Each body must meet security and quality requirements and hold the certifications it delivers.

iasme.co.uk/certification-bodies

**NCSC: Find a Cyber Advisor**

The register of NCSC-assured advisors. Advisors must hold current Cyber Essentials certification themselves.

ncsc.gov.uk

**IASME: Certificate Search**

Check any organisation's Cyber Essentials or Plus certificate by name or number, including your provider's own. It covers certificates issued in the last 12 months.

iasme.co.uk

Know the Fees

0–9 staff

£320

10–49 staff

£440

50–249 staff

£500

250+ staff

£600

IASME's basic Cyber Essentials fees, plus VAT. Cyber Essentials Plus is priced by the provider and depends on the size and complexity of your network. IASME's rough guide for a small, simple company is around £1,400. Source: IASME, Cyber Essentials FAQs.

04 · CHOOSING

Seven Questions to Ask Before You Buy

A good provider welcomes these questions. A weak one gets vague.

1

Are you licensed for the level I need?

IASME's list shows whether a body can assess Basic, Plus or both

2

Who will assess me, and are they a qualified assessor?

Every assessor must work for a Certification Body

3

What exactly does the quote include?

Assessment, support, resubmissions and any Plus audit

4

Do you also supply my IT, and how is that kept separate?

Independence matters when one firm fixes and certifies

5

Will my whole organisation be in scope?

Whole-organisation certification is needed for the included insurance

6

What happens if I fail a requirement?

Ask how many fixes and resubmissions are covered

7

How will you schedule the Plus audit?

Within three months of Basic, you skip the questions stage

**Warning Signs**

- A guaranteed pass
- A vague scope that leaves devices or cloud services out
- A certificate that does not appear in IASME's search
- No licence you can confirm on IASME's list
- Pressure to buy unrelated products or licences

Sources: IASME, Cyber Essentials FAQs and Find a Certification Body; NCSC. Question 4 and the warning signs are NetMonkeys' guidance.

Ten Checks Before You Commit

Work through these in order. Most take minutes, and they protect you from paying twice.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Whole-organisation scope agreed | ☐ Basic or Plus chosen, based on what customers and insurers ask for |
| ☐ Decision made on whether to use an advisor first | ☐ Two or three providers shortlisted from IASME's official list |
| ☐ Each provider's licence checked for your level | ☐ Fixed, itemised quote requested in writing |
| ☐ Internal owner named for the questionnaire | ☐ Evidence gathered: devices, MFA, patching, firewalls, malware protection |
| ☐ Renewal booked in the diary, 12 months ahead | ☐ Certificate checked in IASME's search once issued |

→ Three Steps This Week

1

List every device and cloud service that holds business data

2

Download IASME's free question set and read it through

3

Request quotes from two licensed Certification Bodies

Book a Cyber Essentials Readiness Call

We will check where you stand before you pay for an assessment

0161 834 9345 | 0115 822 1860

contact@netmonkeys.co.uk