



Lynn Watts-Plumpkin, ACS Assessor for SSAIB

The Security Industry Authority (SIA) Approved Contractor Scheme (ACS) uses assessors from one of eight approved assessing bodies, SSAIB being one of these, to undertake inspection activities on their behalf to verify an applicant against the required standard. Companies who achieve this standard can be registered as approved.

Lynn Watts-Plumpkin (a name you are not likely to forget) is an ACS Assessor for SSAIB. I shadowed Lynn one day during an ACS assessment on a company in the North East of England. What follows is a summary of her day during one such inspection.

The Assessment was spread over four days, with Lynn spending time with all levels of staff. From the owners of the company, directors and managers right up to security officers! An additional half day on the ACS assessment is allocated for preparation of the visit plan, in liaison with the company contact and a half day at the end of the assessment to type up the full report and complete the scoring results.

We join Lynn on the second day of the four day assessment. On the first day she met the owner of the manned guarding company, all of the managers and the administration staff. Lynn had face to face meetings with eleven members of staff.

Shadowing Lynn provided a great insight to the work undertaken by the Assessor, but also demonstrated how very seriously the applicant firm took the whole process.

It is clear that the assessment process is very thorough and I found the day very interesting, but tiring. It obviously helped that Lynn has a manned guarding background and understood fully the operational aspects of the company.

If you would like any further information about how SSAIB can help you with the SIA ACS process please call Geoff Rendall at the SSAIB on 0191 296 3242.

- 08.00 Lynn meets Dave the Operations Manager for the company being assessed. Dave will escort Lynn during her visit, taking her round the area to meet clients, consumers and, most importantly, the security officers for the company.
- 09:00 The first client meeting is held. Lynn puts the client at their ease and explains fully the reason for the visit and that anything they may say remains confidential. Dave has been asked to wait out side to ensure the client does not feel compromised. The client was asked a variety of questions to ensure the assessed company is doing what they say they are doing. Questions such as:
- If you have had any issues with the company, are you happy how they have been dealt with?
 - Do you have regular meetings with a representative from the security company and, if so, how are those minutes recorded?
 - Do you know the company's management team?
 - Do the security officers on your site receive a visit from the security company at night? etc. etc. etc.
- After the meeting, which lasted for about twenty minutes, Lynn went to the gatehouse to meet the three security officers on duty. Again Dave, the Operations Manager, was asked to wait out side, so the security officers could talk freely.
- The officers were spoken to individually by Lynn, who again put them at their ease. The interview was friendly, but professional and the security officers were very knowledgeable and helpful. All of them were proudly displaying their SIA licences and were pleased that the industry was changing for the better.
- One officer said, "The Company looks after us well". "We are kept informed about what is happening via the monthly newsletter, which we can contribute to, if we want to". I won Security Officer of the month last month and the company gave me £50 and my picture appeared in the newsletter. The whole family have got a copy now!"
- 10:30 - 17.30 We moved on to the next appointment and the same format happened to a further five clients throughout the day. Consumers were also spoken to; these ranged from the clients staff, to local council officials and police officers.
- By 17:30 Lynn had met and interviewed seventeen people. It was exhausting, just to be there, let alone ask a lot of questions and make notes at the same time.
- 17:30 When most people are finishing work, Lynn and Dave started the first of the evening visits with a meeting at the night site office. It is obvious that the Security Officers are an important part of the assessment and are treated with the respect they deserve. The paperwork, such as the Daily Occurrence book and the Assignment Instructions (AIs) were looked at and the officers asked if the AIs were a true reflection of what happened on site. All officers spoken to during the assessment said that they had an input on the contents. Lynn said, "Unfortunately this is not always the case. Security Officers are often the last people to be consulted on the AIs, yet they are the people doing the actual work on the site".
- Lynn and Dave then went to visit the night controllers and talked through the incident log and booking on and off procedures
- 21:30 Lynn called it a day and went back to the hotel to type up her findings for the day and prepare for day three.