

The SIA...

...Transforming the industry and the wider police family

The primary role of the Security Industry Authority (SIA) is to create the mechanisms by which the private security industry can be transformed or modernised. It is only by modernising the private security industry that its incorporation into the wider police family might be brought about. The aim of this article is to consider one of the main mechanisms of transformation - the Approved Contractor Scheme - and to elaborate upon what is meant by the wider police family.

Transforming the industry

When we hear talk of 'industry transformation' it is easy to get lost in the grand rhetoric and lose sight of the basic goals of the Security Industry Authority. The Authority's mission seems to call for a range of measures to meet its overall aims; those aims in simple terms being:

- To increase public trust by setting and maintaining standards of probity, improving professionalism and opportunities for those who work in the industry.
- To encourage businesses to improve their standards of performance by creating a framework for developing, promoting and spreading best practice.
- By creating industry centres of knowledge and expertise which enable and encourage effective industry development and investment, and finally,
- Strengthen and extend the 'police family' by encouraging and supporting further engagement of the private security industry.

The Approved Contractor Scheme, when fully implemented, through the discipline that it imposes, will go some way towards encouraging the processes of modernisation or transformation outlined in the first three aims. The last aim is somewhat contingent upon the first three and it is likely that a highly incremental integration will follow as the various bodies that are to comprise the wider police family grow in confidence with their role and roles of others.

It is perhaps important to examine some of the ways in which the Approved Contractor Scheme will encourage industry transformation. The public's trust in the ethicality and professionalism of the private security industry will only come about as a consequence of its demonstration of these attributes through daily contact with private and corporate citizens. A key feature of this transformation will be through training courses specific to the needs of the various sectors.

The SIA recognises that it is essential for all personnel involved in the security industry to have undergone a structured programme of training and education resulting in a recognised qualification if they are to be effective and professional in their role. These courses, at the moment, are primarily aimed at front line personnel as it is recognised that those with individual enforcement responsibility must have a broad range of skills and a clear understanding of their role. While it is important to start with the basics, it is expected that as the diversity and importance of their role develops and grows, there will be a commensurate increase in the degree of responsibility expected on them.

According to the SIA 2003 strategic analysis, the annual revenue of the private security industry is between £3 billion and £4 billion and there are around a quarter of a million security operatives working within the industry. While industry transformation might appear to be about the transformation of front line staff through training, a great deal of attention is also being given to the management processes and controls used by security contractors.

To gain Approved Contractor Status, an organisation must demonstrate that it has achieved the SIA standard of business management embodied in the Self-assessment Workbook (SAW). This Workbook is based on the European Foundation Quality Model (EFQM) and it aims to enable an organisation's management to determine whether they meet the ACS standard prior to arranging a verification visit from an approved assessing body like SSAIB. There are nine principle areas to address in the workbook: strategy; processes; commercial relationship

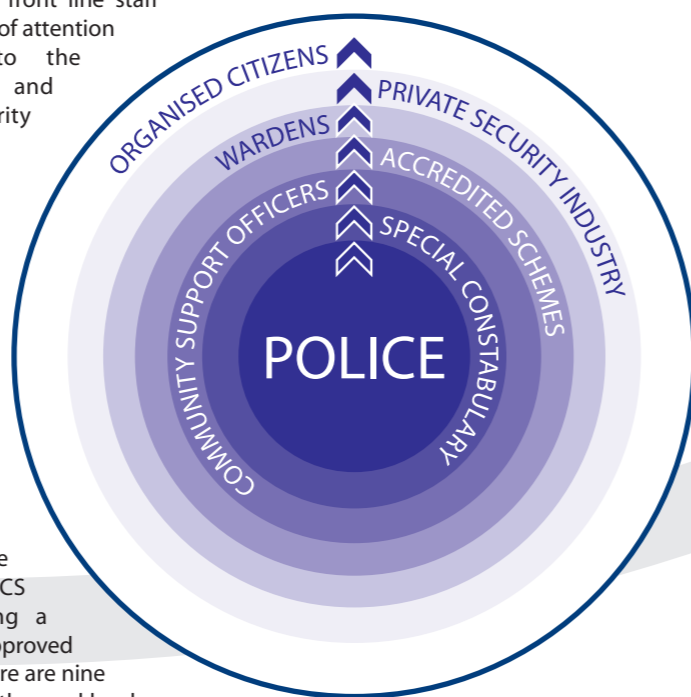
management; financial management; resources; leadership; corporate social responsibility and results. While this may sound daunting, a detailed guidance document has been produced to help applicants understand the requirements and the type of information they need to supply in support of their application.

The aim of the workbook is to help management to demonstrate the tasks and activities they undertake to control and manage their business, and to establish how they determine the success of those activities. The workbook indicates a benchmark standard which all organisations should meet or surpass.

Inevitably some organisations will find the workbook more of a challenge than others. However, the nature of the material requirement will vary with the size and complexity of the organisation. For those organisations that fall short of the standard, there will be a necessity to take stock of their approach to their business practices and procedures and that may result in considerable changes in their methods of operation and approach to the market.

It is hoped that if service providers place greater emphasis on quality of service, the market will also shift from one based on a preoccupation with the lowest cost, to one based on quality of service and assurance of supply. If there is to be a transformation of the industry at the supplier end, then there needs to be a corresponding re-evaluation of the nature of the relationship at the buyer end. Organisations purchasing security services need to consider the vital strategic role that security increasingly plays in the daily operation of their business.

The SIA is committed to spreading best practice and while it is acknowledge that this will not happen overnight, progressively it will bring enduring benefits for the public in general, for the industry itself and for those who commission and buy its services.



The wider police family

We are all used to seeing private security personnel in our everyday lives: in shopping centres; parks; leisure facilities and increasingly patrolling housing estates. In many situations the activities of the private security industry is seen as complementing the work of the police. While some of these activities are strictly commercial, some are based in the public sector as local authorities have developed an overarching awareness of the need to protect public property and the public themselves, particularly the more vulnerable groups like the young and the elderly.

The Government is committed to a more partnership-based approach to crime and disorder and this approach was set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. This approach recognised that crime reduction is not the sole responsibility of the police and in fact the Act places a statutory duty upon the police and local authority to develop and implement a strategy to tackle problems at a local level. So how does this impact upon the concept of the wider police family?

It is possible to view this concept of the partnership between the police and other bodies (local public; private security companies, community and voluntary groups) in two ways: the police-centred view and a more collaborative citizen-centred approach.

The police-centred view might be considered solely in the light of contracted services, that is, the police buy-in private security to fulfil their customer service role. To some extent this is already happening under the auspices the Police Reform Act 2002 for Accredited Community Safety Schemes. These schemes enable the Chief Officers to accredit employees of organisations who contribute towards community safety. These Accredited Persons are given a range of limited, but

targeted powers to deal with specific issues.

However the take-up of has been limited so far with around 450 accredited people across the 21 forces in England and Wales. This is very limited when you compare that number with the overall estimate of 250,000 working in the private security industry. Considerable benefit could be gained by developing an approach that could harness this potential for the good of the wider community.

So, while this is already happening, in a limited way, the SIA sees this approach as really representing the tip of the iceberg. Its aim is to involve the whole private security industry in the extended police family and this requires a more collaborative, as opposed to contractual, approach.

With the collaborative (or citizen-centred) view each element of the family must recognise and value the role played by others. Its approach must be such that it engages the full value of the private security industry. The wider police family should include those in community safety or security roles regardless of whether they are drawn from the private, public or voluntary sector. This should happen not as a consequence of private security industry contractors being under contract to the police (as shown above), but as a consequence of the industry, and citizens in a wider sense, doing its job in a way that results in a tangible and overall reduction in crime and disorder.

While the subject of how the wider police family might look, is still a matter for consultation. It is envisioned as comprising of a multi-level approach with opportunities for many groups to contribute in their own way and that this will only emerge from a clearer understanding of the real benefits that having a broadly based police family might bring. A consultation document from the Security Industry Authority on the 'Extended Police Family' considers some of the possibilities; they are briefly summarised below:

- At one level (deliberately not described as the top level), will be the police providing those services that should only be provided by the state and possessing powers, duties and accountabilities which are possessed by nobody else.

- At another level will be un-sworn officers working for and under the direction of the police but subject to many of the rigours of the public police and its accountability, for example community support officers.
- There will be 'quasi-policing' services provided to the police service or to communities by the private or non-police public sector, such as local authorities, for example prisoner escort services or neighbourhood wardens. The power and accountability of those who hold these roles may vary with the task.

- Another level of 'quasi-policing' provided incidentally to communities by the private sector. This level provides services on contract to other parts of the private (and sometimes public) sector. Understanding this level provides the greatest opportunity to exploit the full extent of the private security industry to the advantage of the whole community. This approach allows the private security industry to pursue its legitimate commercial interests whilst coincidentally contributing to the good of society by demonstrating good citizenship. It is at this level that regulation has its most potential impact, by raising standards and increasing public and police confidence in the industry.

- It is for this final level that the real potential for a regulated private security industry exists. A potential which should be constrained by an open acceptance of its limitations and, because of these, its inability to 'threaten' or undermine the police.

The SIA see the key to the adoption of this multi-level approach as being the acceptance by the police that there is value to come from such an approach and that it will not be funded from the police budget.

The SIA firmly believes that a regulated private security industry would be a valuable contributor to the wider police family without compromising its commercial interest and without usurping the unique accountability and service provided by the police. To achieve this, the private security industry should work collaboratively with other family members doing those things for which it is sufficiently skilled and competent.

The author greatly appreciates and acknowledges the support provided by the Security Industry Authority in the preparation of this article.