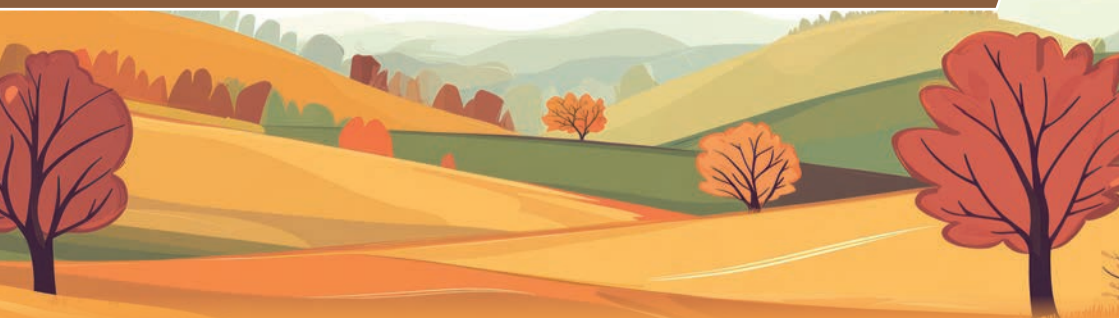


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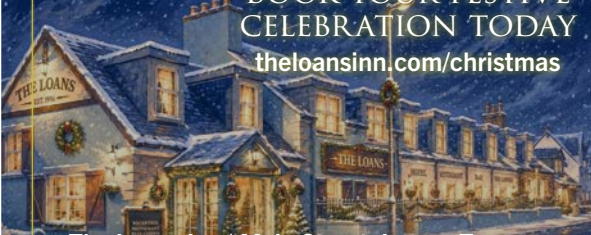
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After a summer of mixed weather, with plenty of sunshine balanced out by more than a few rainy days, autumn has arrived once again. Although Scotland's World Cup campaign didn't last as long as we'd have liked, it certainly added a bit of excitement to the summer. This edition of The Irvine Review is full of local businesses, services and ideas to help you make the most of the months ahead. Thank you for continuing to support the magazine. We hope you enjoy this latest issue.



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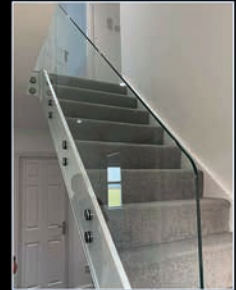
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A Win That Means More Than £90,000

Last month, Geco Connect[®] was announced as one of the winners of Scottish EDGE, securing £90,000 of investment to help us scale the business. However, my daughters were more excited about the award than I was.

They don't fully understand what Scottish EDGE is. They don't know that 383 businesses applied, how difficult it is to reach the final, or what £90,000 of investment means.

What they do know is that Dad has been working late. They know I've spent countless evenings talking about Geco Connect. And they know it's about helping children.

What My Daughters Understand

As parents, we worry about our children every day. We want them to be safe, feel loved and have people around them who care.

Now imagine your child didn't have that. Imagine they had experienced trauma, been neglected, or been abandoned by the very people who were supposed to protect them.

For thousands of children and young people in care, that isn't something they have to imagine. It's their reality.

The Problem We Set Out to Solve

Despite the incredible commitment of care workers, teachers, residential staff and support teams, many spend more time completing paperwork and administration than they do with the children who need them most.

That's the problem we set out to solve.

We created Geco Connect because every minute spent duplicating reports, chasing information or completing administration is a minute that could have been spent supporting a young person. When time is taken away from care, something is taken away from a child.



Scottish EDGE recognised that vision and awarded Geco Connect £90,000 to help us scale. Out of 383 applications from across Scotland, we were incredibly proud to be selected as one of the winners.

But the award isn't the achievement I'm most proud of. It's that people are starting to believe what we believe: that technology can give time back to the people who care, and that better systems can create better outcomes.

Why Time Matters

This challenge doesn't stop at Scotland's borders. Millions of children around the world rely on care and education services every day. If we can continue building what we've started, the impact could reach far beyond what we imagined.

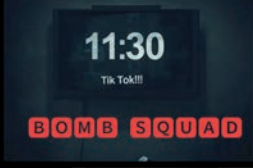
Winning Scottish EDGE has given us confidence that we're building something the sector genuinely needs. But the real question is whether the systems you're relying on today are giving your staff enough time with children, providing leaders with the oversight they need and producing the evidence regulators increasingly expect. If the answer is anything less than a confident yes, perhaps the conversation isn't about changing software at all. Perhaps it's about changing outcomes.

We'd love to show you what's possible with Geco Connect. Even if it isn't the right fit for your organisation, we hope you'll leave the conversation with new ideas that help you spend less time on paperwork and more time doing what matters most — improving the lives of children and young people.

Ultimately, this isn't about winning an award. It's about what we can do with the opportunity it gives us. Somewhere tonight, there is a young person who simply needs more time from the adults trying to help them. Together, we can help make sure they get it.



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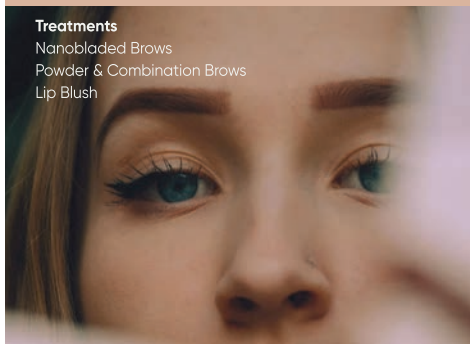
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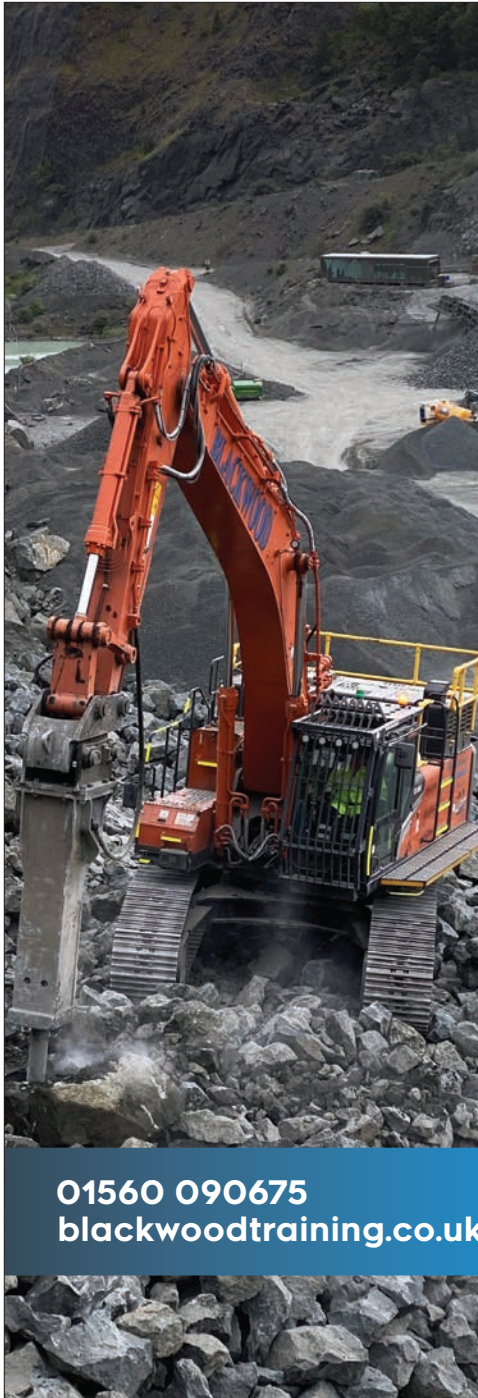
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Cyber Essentials: Why it matters to UK businesses



John Bourne
IT Director

A practical introduction for business owners, directors and senior managers.

Cyber security is now part of everyday business life. It is no longer only a concern for large organisations or specialist IT teams.

For businesses of every size, protecting systems, data, customers and suppliers has become a core part of good governance, commercial credibility and day-to-day resilience.

One of the clearest ways to show that the basics are in place is through Cyber Essentials: a UK Government-backed certification scheme designed to help organisations protect themselves against the most common cyber threats.

What is Cyber Essentials?

Cyber Essentials focuses on five practical technical controls: firewalls, secure configuration, security update management, user access control and malware protection.

These controls help reduce the likelihood of common attacks, such as criminals exploiting known vulnerabilities, weak passwords, poorly configured devices or unpatched software.

Launched in 2014, the scheme was created after analysis showed that many successful cyber attacks could have been prevented,

or significantly limited, by a small number of basic security measures. Today, Cyber Essentials is widely recognised as a baseline standard for cyber security across the UK.

Cyber Essentials is a UK Government-backed scheme led by the National Cyber Security Centre, with IASME serving as its official delivery partner.

Why it matters today

For many organisations, Cyber Essentials is no longer simply a "nice to have". It is increasingly becoming part of how businesses prove they are a safe and credible organisation to work with.

Government departments, public bodies and larger commercial organisations increasingly consider cyber security certification as part of procurement and supplier assurance.

In some sectors, holding a valid Cyber Essentials certificate can determine whether an organisation is eligible to tender for certain contracts.

This reflects a wider understanding of cyber risk. A weakness in one supplier, contractor or service provider can create risk for everyone connected to them.

As a result, many tier 1 and tier 2 organisations are looking more closely at their supply chains and asking suppliers to demonstrate that they meet a recognised cyber security baseline.

For small and medium-sized businesses, this creates both a challenge and an opportunity. Certification can reduce risk, improve internal processes and provide reassurance to customers, insurers, partners and procurement teams.

Cyber resilience is moving up the agenda

The UK's approach to cyber resilience is continuing to evolve, and the message to business leaders is clear: cyber security is becoming a board-level issue, not just an IT concern.

The Cyber Security and Resilience Bill, currently progressing through Parliament, is intended to strengthen the UK's defences against cyber attacks and modernise the existing regulatory framework.

While the full impact will depend on the final legislation and guidance, the direction of travel is important. Organisations that act early are likely to be better prepared for future procurement expectations, customer assurance requests and regulatory scrutiny.

Cyber Essentials provides a practical starting point because it focuses on the fundamental controls that every organisation should understand, apply and maintain.

How SOD-IT can help

Talk to our team: support@sod-it.co.uk

Here at SOD-IT, we work with organisations across the UK to achieve and maintain their Cyber Essentials certification.

We understand that, for many businesses, the process can feel technical or time-consuming at first. Our role is to make it clear, practical and manageable.

We help organisations understand what is required, identify any gaps, make the necessary improvements and maintain compliance over time.

Whether you are responding to a tender, reviewing supply-chain requirements, improving your internal cyber posture or preparing for future assurance demands,

Cyber Essentials is a sensible and recognised step forward.

If you would like to understand Cyber Essentials in more detail, and how it may impact your business or organisation, our SOD-IT team can assess where your organisation currently stands, identify any gaps and explain what would be required to achieve Cyber Essentials certification.





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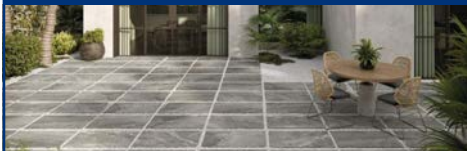
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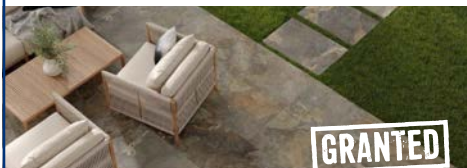
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