Are you ready for Cyber Essentials?

A free 10 question checklist for small businesses, from Platform Collective, Bromley.

Tick yes or no for each question. Each one is based on the official NCSC document, Cyber Essentials: Requirements for IT Infrastructure v3.3, in force from 27 April 2026. This is a quick guide to help you see where you stand. It is not the official questionnaire, and only an IASME licensed Certification Body can award Cyber Essentials.

1. **Do you know every device and online service used for work, including personal phones that get work email?**

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   Personal devices that access work data are in scope, and cloud services such as Microsoft 365 cannot be left out. (Scope)

2. **Is multi factor authentication turned on for every person on Microsoft 365 and every other online service you use for work?**

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   Signing in to cloud services must always use multi factor authentication. (User access control)

3. **Does everyone have their own login, and are accounts removed or disabled as soon as someone leaves?**

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   Users need unique credentials, and accounts must be removed when no longer needed. (User access control)

4. **Do admins use a separate admin account only for admin tasks, and not for email or browsing?**

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   Administrative activities must use separate accounts. (User access control)

5. **Is every operating system and app still supported by its maker and properly licensed?**

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   Software must be licensed and supported, and removed when support ends. (Security update management)

6. **Are updates set to install automatically, with critical and high risk updates applied within 14 days?**

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   Automatic updates must be on where possible, and serious fixes installed within 14 days of release. (Security update management)

7. **Is malware protection, such as Microsoft Defender, switched on and up to date on every laptop and desktop?**

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   A malware protection mechanism must be active on all devices in scope. (Malware protection)

8. **Is a firewall switched on for every device, and has the default admin password on your office router been changed?**

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   Every device needs a correctly configured firewall, and default admin passwords must be changed. (Firewalls)

9. **Does every device need a PIN, password or fingerprint to unlock, and lock after no more than 10 wrong attempts?**

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   Unlock PINs or passwords must be at least 6 characters, with protection against guessing. (Secure configuration)

10. **Have you removed unused accounts and software, and turned off auto run for USB drives and discs?**

    ☐ Yes ☐ No

    Unnecessary accounts and software must be removed, and auto run must be disabled. (Secure configuration)

What your answers mean

Ten yeses means you are in a good position to apply. Any no is something to fix first. Backups are not a Cyber Essentials requirement, but the NCSC strongly recommends them.

Until 31 March 2027, or sooner if the money runs out, the government's First Step Fund takes 75% off the assessment fee for eligible organisations. A business with up to 9 staff pays £80 plus VAT instead of £320 plus VAT. IASME decides who is eligible.

Want a hand with the noes? I prepare Bromley firms of 1 to 9 people on Microsoft 365 for Cyber Essentials, for a fixed £395 including up to 4 hours of fixes. Email hello@platformcollective.co.uk to book a free 20 minute call.

Sources (checked 14 November 2026):
NCSC, Requirements for IT Infrastructure v3.3: https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/files/cyber-essentials-requirements-for-it-infrastructure-v3-3.pdf
NCSC, Cyber Essentials help and resources: https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/cyberessentials/resources
IASME, First Step Fund: https://firststep.iasme.co.uk/
GOV.UK, Cyber Essentials funding package: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cyber-essentials-funding-package/cyber-essentials-funding-package