

SIA suspends over 130 licences and seeks retraining after investigating training fraud

Last month, the Security Industry Authority (SIA) suspended more than 130 SIA licences as an ongoing criminal investigation revealed that some licence-holders may not have been awarded their qualifications legitimately.

Individuals are licensed by the SIA to work in seven different sectors, including door supervision, security guarding, and close protection. Licence applicants must complete sector-specific qualifications to become licensed.

The SIA does not deliver training but sets and approves training standards; this is done by creating and publishing Specifications for Learning and Qualifications. SIA-endorsed [awarding organisations](#) maintain standards through the approval and monitoring of training providers who deliver the qualifications to people seeking to be licensed to work in the private security industry.

As part of a current SIA investigation, an awarding organisation contacted learners of a particular training provider requesting they verify their qualifications. The SIA also sent all affected learners a message via their online licensing system. They were asked to take action and those who failed to do so have had their licences suspended.

Nicholas Banks, the SIA's Head of Licensing and Service Delivery explains why credible qualifications are so important. He said:

We must ensure that all licence holders can carry out their roles professionally and safely. If we find evidence that there is any doubt about the legitimacy of licence-linked training, we will take robust action to ensure public safety. This can include the suspension or revocation of licences. We may also place conditions on the licence-holder to engage with an awarding organisation and retake qualifications to retain a licence. If they fail to do this, they risk having their application withdrawn or losing their licence.

We want to be proactive and will take corrective action on qualifications as we recognise our role in upholding the standards of the private security industry.

At the core of the SIA's private security regulation is ensuring security officers are correctly trained to carry out their roles. Each year, at least 80,000 individuals take licence-linked qualifications, providing the skills to work in a variety of challenging roles as security operatives across the UK.

The SIA continues to investigate and works with awarding organisations to verify qualifications and provide assurance that qualifications remain valid. In some limited cases, when the SIA becomes aware of criminal activity associated to training, it will investigate and intervene particularly where we believe there is criminal intent.

Offences can be committed in a variety of different ways. In some cases, learners believed their training course was genuine, but fell victim to improper training. In other cases, learners may have known the training was fraudulent.

As the investigations continue, the SIA's Criminal Investigations Manager, Nathan Salmon said:

We will work with awarding organisations to limit training criminality. The SIA cannot comment further on individual licence holders or ongoing criminal investigations, although we will make resulting conviction information available.

Notes to Editors:

Further information:

- The Security Industry Authority is the organisation responsible for regulating the private security industry in the United Kingdom, reporting to the Home Secretary under the terms of the Private Security Industry Act 2001. Our main duties are: the compulsory licensing of individuals undertaking designated activities; and managing the voluntary Approved Contractor Scheme.
- For further information about the Security Industry Authority or to sign up for email updates visit www.gov.uk/sia. The SIA is also on [Facebook](#) (Security Industry Authority) and [Twitter](#) (SIAuk).
- **Media enquiries only** please contact: 0300 123 9869, media.enquiries@sia.gov.uk

Japanese tech giant invests in Dagenham with new data centre

Today major Japanese global technology services provider NTT Ltd., announces the opening of a new data centre, in Dagenham, East London, expecting to create 100 jobs in a boost to London's technology sector.

The 'London 1' data centre is the latest addition to its growing portfolio, which includes five other data centres in the UK in Hemel Hempstead and Slough. The site is also a location of historic innovation; Winston Churchill

benefitted from penicillin developed on the site by May and Baker during World War II, and the famous Ford car factory was adjacent.

London 1 Data Center opens as part of NTT's ongoing £500 million data centre investment plan and highlights its commitment to the UK's digital and tech industry.

The Department for International Trade has provided extensive support for the company throughout the investment process, connecting the business with government and providing information on the Technology and Data Centre markets in the UK, skills and training, and smart cities opportunities.

The department will continue to provide support for expansion of NTT Ltd.'s data centre portfolio in the UK as they look to secure additional facilities to meet growing demand.

This investment closely follows the [UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement](#) agreed in September, which brings together two of the world's most technologically advanced nations, placing the UK at the forefront of shaping new global standards on digital trade.

It also follows the major investment by US property developer Hackman Capital Partners in a Hollywood-style film production complex in Dagenham – across the road from the London 1 data centre.

Minister for Investment, Gerry Grimstone said:

World-class digital infrastructure projects are fundamental to our wider digital and investment strategies. Businesses are increasingly demanding infrastructure like this to operate innovatively, securely and efficiently.

NTT's continued commitment to the UK will help us to build and solidify our reputation as a leader in technological innovation in the industries of the future that will help us build back better.

Jason Goodall, CEO, NTT Ltd. said:

This milestone data center and large investment shows our commitment to the UK market as well as the demand from our customers for sustainable, secure and scalable data centers. We are headquartered in the UK and it is fundamental to our future growth plans.

Florian Winkler, CEO of the Global Data Centers EMEA division of NTT Ltd., said:

We're extremely proud to be opening London 1 Data Center and investing in the next era of innovation in Dagenham. UK data centers are a critical enabler of global business and ensure business continuity 365 days a year. The pandemic has demonstrated the vital importance of effective connectivity and reliable infrastructure for businesses to operate.

The UK headquartered firm chose Dagenham for the area's reputation as a digital and media innovation hub and its proximity to the Docklands. The Docklands is already established as the UK's internet hub and backbone for the global internet network that facilitates the majority of the London Internet Exchange's (LINX) infrastructure. The new location in Dagenham will more than triple NTT's UK data centre footprint and be a major boost to the UK's thriving tech industry.

Cllr Darren Rodwell, Leader of Barking and Dagenham Council said:

We're delighted to welcome London 1 Data Center to our borough. This latest addition will help support East London's emerging technological industries and provide local jobs focused on digital skills. Today's announcement will mean Barking and Dagenham will be able to power London's digital led economy well into the 21st century, building into our vision of a Digital Dagenham.

London 1 Data Center, when fully operational, will have 25,600 sqm of IT space and a maximum IT load of 64 MW. It will provide businesses with the best possible physical and technical infrastructure supported by N+1 UPS systems, generator backup, as well as highly redundant cooling systems. The data centre also includes a Technology Experience Lab, which will be used to test new technologies and validate hybrid cloud services and innovations faster and at a lower cost.

The data center has been built with sustainability and security in mind. The latest technology removes the need for compressors and refrigerants, which can have a significant impact on global warming. Additionally, the data center will deliver a power usage effectiveness of 1.2, which is aligned with industry best practice; and uses smaller generators to generate fewer greenhouse gases. NTT will only use guaranteed renewable power throughout the site.

A blog on SLC's Corporate Plan by CEO,

Paula Sussex

Delivering student finance in a Covid year

Managing the delivery of student finance against a backdrop of Covid-19 has been a major focus for SLC in 2020. Like many other organisations on the night of March 23rd, we had to make the organisational equivalent of a handbrake turn to transform into a home-working operation, complete with assessing and customer contact services, which we did in one month. To do this required a significant technological and logistical effort, and we also retrained and switched staff from a number of other areas of SLC to the frontline to ensure that students' applications were processed so that their finance arrived at the right time. We have this year financed a record number of new and returning students in England and Wales, having successfully paid over £7bn in maintenance loans and tuition fee loans (on behalf of students) to universities and colleges. We are very pleased that, for the vast majority of our customers, the experience of applying for student finance has been smooth. But as ever, we regret where our service has fallen short of our standards which further vindicates the case for our transformation programme.

Supporting the finances of the institutions of the higher education has also presented its challenges and has tested our ability to adapt our processes and systems to the needs of the sector, working as we do within a prescriptive policy regime. So, for example, at the request of the Department of Education and Devolved Administrations of Wales and Northern Ireland, we revised the schedule of tuition fee loan payments to Higher Education Providers for the 2020/21 Academic Year. This revision enabled education providers to access the second instalment of tuition fee payments early, while ensuring that students were not impacted by the change. In the future, our policy simplification programme will maintain this innovative focus and will support a more streamlined application process for our customers.

Realising our strategic goals

While the challenge of 2020 has undoubtedly been to manage the impact of Covid-19, we have nonetheless continued to progress the realisation of our long-term goals. Last week, we published our Corporate Plan, which sets out how we deliver those goals and our strategy over the next three years. It emphasises our central commitment to provide our customers with an outstanding customer experience and to enable them to invest in their futures.

Our transformation programme, Evolve, is already enabling SLC's ambition to improve the customer experience through digital technologies, a better use of data, reforming policy commissioning, simplifying products and making SLC a great place to work. Our strategy seeks to fundamentally change how we operate, such that the majority of our customers can self-serve, which in turn frees up more time for our colleagues to focus their attention and expertise on helping customers with more complex needs and circumstances. Earlier this year we launched our online repayment service to provide online

access to up-to-date balances – for the first time in the 30 years since SLC launched.

Key to transforming the customer and colleague experience next year will be the introduction of our new Customer Engagement Management system. This will enable us to access all of a customer's interactions with us within a single system, instead of hunting through multiple systems, often when the customer is waiting for an answer, as they do now. Crucially, this system will also allow customers to track their applications and other outstanding activities, clearly understand the next steps and any actions they are required to take, and to take those actions directly through digital services. This will significantly reduce the need for customers to call us. Where customers do need to contact us, they will be able to do so via a channel of their choice. It will also allow us to track the progress of a customer applications, something that is not possible with our current fragmented systems. That will allow us to address issues, which currently slow up or complicate the process, more quickly and effectively than we can now.

Improving the use of data is also key to our transformation. The success of our customer service and our duty to the taxpayer, to ensure that we collect every pound due on a loan, relies on the quality of our data, and it is vital that this is accurate and consistent.

Looking forward to 2021

Despite the recent positive news about the vaccine, we know that there will continue to be challenges for students, our staff and the institutions that provide higher and further education. A key theme of the past months has been to identify emerging operational risks and take swift corrective action. Next year, and working closely with our shareholders, we will continue to do the same.

I don't underestimate how much we must do to deliver on the goals set out in our corporate plan. However, our response to the challenges of the past months strengthens my confidence in SLC's ability to achieve this and, in so doing, to continue to support students and graduates to invest in their futures.

[Paula Sussex](#) is Chief Executive of the Student Loans Company

Private International Law Bill gains Royal Assent

Press release

The Private International Law Bill (2020) received royal assent today (14 December 2020) allowing the UK to implement vital agreements which protect the country's businesses and citizens across borders.



- Bill allows UK to implement its own Private International Law agreements
- 10-year strategy to capitalise on this new freedom published shortly

These agreements help to resolve a range of legal disputes – from returning children abducted by a parent, settling international business disagreements, to helping prevent a spouse living abroad dodging child maintenance obligations.

A public consultation on a 10-year strategy which seeks to capitalise on the UK's regained capability in this area of law will be published shortly.

It will provide a blueprint for maintaining Britain's status as a leading global jurisdiction for businesses to operate in, by giving them the legal certainty they need. It will also ensure that consumers and families have access to the most effective ways of resolving disputes in an ever-more globalised world.

Lord Chancellor Robert Buckland said:

These agreements provide vital protections to UK businesses, individuals and families looking to live, work, travel and trade across borders.

We can now enjoy the freedom of being able to strike and implement our own Private International Law deals, ensuring they continue to have the interests of UK citizens at heart.

Without the ability to implement these agreements in domestic law, there could be parallel court cases in different countries, leading to conflicting decisions where UK individuals, businesses and families would bear the brunt of legal costs.

The Bill also maintains three key existing agreements, known as Hague Conventions, to ensure their clear implementation at the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020, and will enable the implementation of

the Lugano Convention 2007, should the UK's application to re-join it be successful.

It provides an overarching legislative framework, enabling individual private international law (PIL) agreements to be implemented via secondary legislation now the UK has left the EU.

Notes to editors

- The Private International Law Bill (2020) received Royal Assent today. It allows the UK to secure its own Private International Law (PIL) agreements now the UK has left the EU.
- PIL agreements cover aspects of civil, family and commercial law, with a real and lasting impacts on people's lives. PIL agreements could mean, for example
 - child maintenance obligations imposed in one country can be recognised and enforced in another
 - UK citizens can have confidence that if they travel, buy goods or have an accident abroad there is a way to resolve any legal disputes that may arise.
 - businesses can feel confident entering into cross-border transactions, knowing that in the event of a dispute, there is a clear framework of rules for resolving it
 - divorces can be recognised in other countries
 - children abducted by one of their parents can be returned to their home country, and
 - businesses can feel confident entering into cross-border transactions, knowing that in the event of a dispute, there is a clear framework of rules for resolving it.
- Beyond underpinning future deals, the Bill simplifies the implementation of three existing Hague Conventions at the end of the Transition Period:
 - 1996 Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children: Helps resolve issues around residence and contact with children where parents live in different countries
 - 2005 Hague Convention on Choice of Court Agreements: Offers legal certainty in some cross-border contractual disputes by deciding which court should hear a case and enabling the decision to be recognised and enforced in another country
 - 2007 Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance: Guarantees international recovery of child support and other forms of family maintenance across borders.
- A public consultation on a 10-year strategy for Private International Law will be published shortly.

GAD's role in pensions consultation

News story

GAD has worked with the Northern Ireland Department of Justice by developing its response to the McCloud ruling, and provided wider pensions consultancy advice.



The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) has worked with Northern Ireland's Department of Justice (DoJ) on a consultation following a legal ruling.

Courts and consultation

The consultation, published on 14 October 2020, was on proposals to remove age discrimination from the Northern Ireland Judicial Pension Scheme.

In the [McCloud / Sargeant ruling](#), the Court of Appeal found transitional protections given to older members in the pension scheme directly discriminated against the scheme's younger members. In response, the DoJ issued a consultation on how such discrimination would be addressed.

The consultation, ['Northern Ireland Judicial Pensions: Proposed response to McCloud'](#), set out how the discrimination identified by the McCloud / Sargeant case will be removed. GAD provided input to this by estimating the potential cost of the proposed remedy.

Remedy impact

As part of this project, pensions experts in GAD prepared some detailed analysis to estimate the cost of the remedy. They also considered the impact on the cost cap mechanism, the 2020 valuation, the scheme's accounts and the scheme's factors.

GAD Actuary Ben Scutt, who advises the DoJ, said: "We have worked closely with colleagues at the Department of Justice to develop their response to the

McCloud ruling, providing actuarial costings and wider pensions consultancy advice."

Consultation timeline

The consultation, which was open for 8 weeks, closed on 9 December 2020 and the results are due later in 2021.

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