OFFICIAL 2026 AUDIT GUIDE

The 2026 Cyber Essentials Pre-Audit Checklist

5 Critical NCSC Technical Controls for UK IT Directors & SMEs

✓ Fast-Track Your Audit in 24-48 Hours

1. Boundary Firewalls & WAN Hardening
2. Secure System Configuration & Default Password Removal
3. Mandatory MFA & User Access Least Privilege
4. Endpoint EDR Malware & 14-Day Patch SLA

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Controls 1 & 2: Firewalls & Configuration

01. Boundary Firewalls & Routers

- Block inbound WAN access to Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP Port 3389).
- Change default router administrative passwords on all office connections.
- Restrict cloud security group ports on AWS, Azure, and Google Cloud.
- Enforce software firewall rules on all remote worker laptops.

02. Secure System Configuration

- Remove or disable unnecessary guest accounts and manufacturer bloatware.
- Disable auto-run features on USB drives and removable storage media.
- Set account lockouts (max 10 failed login attempts).
- Enforce minimum 12+ character password policies or password managers.

Controls 3 & 4: Access Control & Malware

03. User Access & Mandatory MFA

- 100% Mandatory Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) on M365 & Google.
- Enforce separate Administrator accounts for daily web/email activities.
- Revoke access instantly for leavers and decommissioned accounts.
- Apply Least Privilege access rules to shared drives and cloud folders.

04. Malware & Endpoint Protection

- Ensure active Antivirus / EDR software is running on all workstations.
- Enable automatic daily virus definition updates.
- Configure OS application sandboxing or software execution controls.
- Block execution of untrusted email attachments and malicious scripts.

Control 5: Patch SLA & Audit Scope

05. Patch Management (14-Day Mandate)

- Apply High & Critical security patches within 14 days of vendor release.
- Upgrade or remove unsupported End-of-Life software (Windows 10 EOS).
- Keep web browsers (Chrome, Edge, Safari) updated automatically.
- Enforce automatic OS security updates on desktop and mobile fleets.

Scoping Rules & Boundary Isolation

- Include all devices accessing corporate emails or cloud files in scope.
- Enforce Mobile Device Management (MDM) on personal smartphones (BYOD).
- Segment guest Wi-Fi networks from core corporate networks.
- Ensure remote home routers have software firewalls enabled.

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