

Navigating the eDV Talent Landscape

Strategies for consultancies delivering into UK National Security

The competition for eDV-cleared technology talent is intensifying across the UK's national security consultancy ecosystem.

Our latest whitepaper explores the critical trends, challenges, and opportunities for prime contractors and sub-primes (including SMEs) delivering services into national security programmes.

Drawing on candidate surveys, recruitment consultant interviews, and labour market data, we uncover how hiring dynamics are shifting, and what consultancies must do to secure and retain the best talent.

Key findings

Salaries are climbing fast

18% average salary increase over the past 12 months.

52% of accepted offers exceeded initial candidate expectations.

Speed wins the war for talent

Fast, 1-2 stage hiring processes secure talent in as little as 2 weeks.

Extended hiring processes increase the risk of candidate loss.

Hybrid flexibility is now expected — even at eDV level

Candidates increasingly prioritise hybrid working arrangements alongside compensation.

Lack of flexibility is a top reason for disengagement.

Clearance bottlenecks remain a critical risk

eDV clearance timelines slow onboarding and create candidate uncertainty.

Proactive post-offer engagement is critical to prevent dropouts.

Candidate experience is a major differentiator

Poor feedback loops, slow contracts, and rigid salary negotiation drive high attrition rates.



Salaries increasing

Average 18% rise across eDV-cleared roles



Fast hiring processes win

1-2-stage recruitment drives acceptance



Hybrid work demanded

Flexibility expected for even for eDV roles

Highest dropout risk

- Final interview
- Offer acceptance
- Start date



47% of candidates cited flexibility as a top 3 retention factor

SMEs vs. Primes

Primes:

- Hold the lion's share of end-customer demand.
- Offer a wider variety of cleared opportunities and greater project stability.

SMEs:

- Move faster and offer a more personalised experience where candidates feel valued.
- Agile decision-making and flexible onboarding are key advantages.

SMEs vs. Large Enterprise

	SME	Large Enterprise
Agility	High	Low
Bureaucracy	Low	High

Recommendations

- Primes should leverage project breadth while reforming onboarding and clearance processes to be more candidate-friendly.
- SMEs should double down on agility, flexibility, and cultural proposition to attract candidates overlooked by slower systems.
- All consultancies must invest in pre-cleared talent pools, deliver faster feedback cycles, and design hybrid work models wherever possible.

Although few candidates initially state that pay and benefits are their top priority, our experience is that this becomes much more important during the process and is the primary reason for candidates accepting and declining opportunities, followed by flexible working and career growth/opportunities."

Sean Brown, Practice Director at Henderson Scott

Looking ahead

- Ongoing salary inflation for in-demand tech roles (Software, DevOps, Cloud)
- Hybrid work expectations will become the norm
- SMEs will continue to innovate faster than primes
- Strategic partnerships with academia will be critical to build future pipelines

Want the full insights?

Download the complete whitepaper including deeper findings, strategies, and forecasts [here](#).

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