

The IT Support Buyer's Guide for Kent SMBs

9 questions every business owner should ask before signing, or renewing, any IT support contract. Written by the team that reviewed 13 Kent IT companies, one by one.

- SLA REALITY CHECK
- PROVING TRANSPARENCY
- RED FLAGS
- CERTIFICATIONS
- SWITCHING GUIDE
- QUESTIONS TO ASK

3.3 MIN AVG RESPONSE SLA COMPLIANCE 100% 703 TICKETS JAN 2026 £40 FROM PER USER/MONTH

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Good Example Contract

INTRODUCTION

Most IT contracts are signed without the right questions being asked.

Not because business owners are careless, but because IT companies are very good at making vague promises sound concrete.

"Fast response times," "Proactive support," "Your dedicated account manager." These phrases appear on almost every IT company's website. They're not lies, exactly. But they're not commitments either, and by the time you find out what they actually mean, you're locked in.

This guide gives you the specific questions that separate real service commitments from marketing language, and tells you what good answers actually look like. Every question in here is based on a real issue we've seen businesses face when they come to us after a bad experience with another provider.

Use it before you sign anything. Use it at renewal time. Use it to benchmark your current provider against what good looks like.

(Ben Wicker, Managing Director, WikiTech)

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QUESTION 1 OF 9

What is your average response time, and can you prove it?

Response time is the metric IT companies talk about most and measure least honestly. The difference between a **target** and an **average** is everything. A target means they aim to hit it most of the time. An average is what actually happens, measured across every ticket, including the ones that take longer. Ask for last month's actual data, not a contractual commitment.

GOOD ANSWERS

- A specific number backed by real data: "Our January average was 3.3 minutes"
- Willingness to share monthly reporting as part of the contract
- A clear distinction between first response and resolution
- An SLA that specifies what happens if they miss it

RED FLAGS

- "We aim for 2 hours" or "we target same-day response"
- An SLA that only covers critical issues and vaguely defines "critical"
- No historical data available, or an unwillingness to share it
- Response time buried in the small print but never mentioned upfront

ASK THIS EXACTLY

"Can you show me last month's actual average response time across all tickets? Not a target, the real data."

WIKITECH'S ANSWERS

Our January 2025 average first response time was **3.3 minutes** across 703 tickets, with **100% SLA compliance**. We share this data with every client in a monthly report. Our SLA commits to a 30-minute first response during business hours, but the average is far faster because we started to handle demand, not just to meet contractual minimums.

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QUESTION 2 OF 9

Will I get direct access to senior engineers?

Most IT companies use a tiered support model: a first-line helpdesk answers your call, logs the ticket, and tries basic fixes before escalating to someone more qualified. This is the **single biggest source of slow resolution times and repeat issues**. You call with a problem, spend ten minutes explaining it to someone who can't fix it, get put on hold while they escalate, and start again. Ask specifically who picks up when you call.

GOOD ANSWERS

- Direct access to 3rd-line engineers from the first contact
- No tie-line filter: the person who answers can fix it
- A named team or dedicated engineers rather than a generic pool
- Engineer seniority is stated part of the service proposition

RED FLAGS

- "Our first-line team will triage your issue"
- A scripted call-centre feel when you need-call them
- Large headcount (200+ staff) with no clarity on who handles what
- Escalation paths described as a feature rather than a failure mode

ASK THIS EXACTLY

"If I call right now with a server issue, who answers? What is their seniority level, and will they be able to fix it without escalating?"

WIKITECH'S ANSWERS

Every engineer at WikiTech is a **senior 3rd-line engineer**. There is no first-line, no chatbot, no escalation path. When you contact us, the person who responds is qualified to fix the issue, not to log it and pass it on. Our team of six includes four part-timers, so you get continuity, ownership, and real technical expertise from the first contact.

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QUESTION 3 OF 9

Is Microsoft 365 management included in the price?

This is one of the most common hidden charges in managed IT. Most businesses run on Microsoft 365, and most IT companies charge separately to manage it. **There are two distinct things here: M365 support (day-to-day issues, user management, mailbox admin) and M365 licensing (the actual Microsoft licenses)**. Some providers include one in their headline price, some include actual support but not licensing, and very few include both. Get absolute clarity before you sign anything.

GOOD ANSWERS

- M365 user and mailbox management explicitly included in the base price
- M365 licensing billed separately at cost, with no mark-up
- A clear written breakdown of what is and is not included
- No per-ticket charges for M365 admin tasks

RED FLAGS

- A vague answer: "M365 is covered as part of your support"
- Mark-up on Microsoft licensing (you pay more than Microsoft's list price)
- A separate "Microsoft management" line item charged per user
- M365 admin tasks classed as "projects" and billed ad hoc

ASK THIS EXACTLY

"If I need a new user set up in Microsoft 365, is Microsoft created, and their account configured, is that included in my monthly price, or charged separately?"

WIKITECH'S ANSWERS

Microsoft 365 user and mailbox management is **included as standard** in our support price. Day-to-day M365 tasks (new users, mailbox changes, licence assignments, security configuration) are covered. M365 licensing is billed separately at Microsoft's list price with our mark-up. You will be charged twice for the same thing.

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QUESTION 4 OF 9

Can I see your pricing online?

Pricing transparency is one of the clearest signals of how a company treats clients. If a company won't publish its prices, ask yourself why. Usually the answer is that they want to charge different clients different amounts, or they want the chance to upsell before you know the total cost. Published pricing removes that dynamic entirely. It also means no surprise invoices six months in.

GOOD ANSWERS

- A fixed per-user monthly price published openly on the website
- A clear explanation of what is and is not included at that price
- Any setup fee disclosed upfront

RED FLAGS

- "We'll send you a bespoke quote" with no published starting point
- Prices that only appear after a sales call
- Per-ticket or per-hour billing buried in the contract small print
- Overage charges for tickets above a monthly limit

ASK THIS EXACTLY

"Where can I find your pricing online? And are there any charges beyond the per-user fee, overages, project fees, or on-site visits?"

WIKITECH'S ANSWERS

Our pricing is published at [wikitech.co.uk/pricing](#). Two fixed plans: **£40 (Standard)** and **£55 (Premium)** per user per month, from a minimum of 5 users. Unlimited remote support included. No per-ticket charges. No overage fees. Further add-ons from £15/user/month. Specific fees are quoted upfront where applicable. What you see is what you pay.

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QUESTION 5 OF 9

What certifications do you hold?

Certifications aren't just badges, they're evidence of process, security posture, and technical capability. The key ones to look for are **Cyber Essentials** (or **Cyber Essentials Plus**) and **Microsoft Partner status**. Cyber Essentials is a UK Government backed scheme that demonstrates basic cyber hygiene. If a provider hasn't bothered to certify themselves, that tells you something about how they'll approach your security. Microsoft Partner status has tiers, so ask specifically which tier, as it affects access to technical support from Microsoft.

GOOD ANSWERS

- Cyber Essentials or Cyber Essentials Plus, with the certificate available to view
- Microsoft Partner status with a named tier
- ISO 27001 if you're in a regulated sector
- Certifications actively maintained and not expired

RED FLAGS

- "We follow best practices" with no formal certification
- Cyber Essentials expired, or not held at all
- Microsoft partnership claimed without a verified tier
- Unable to produce certificates when asked

ASK THIS EXACTLY

"Can you send me a copy of your current Cyber Essentials certificate and confirm your Microsoft Partner tier?"

WIKITECH'S ANSWERS

WikiTech holds **Cyber Essentials certification**, maintained annually. Our CTO Martin Sandford leads our Cyber Essentials process and specialises in Microsoft security configuration, Conditional Access, and Email IQ. We also offer **Cyber Essentials Plus preparation** for those seeking higher accreditation. Certificates are available on request.

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QUESTION 6 OF 9

Are you actually local?

"We cover Kent" can mean an engineer is based in Maidstone, or it can mean a national helpdesk with a regional sales team and a contractor who drives two hours when you need someone on-site. For remote support, proximity doesn't matter much. For on-site visits, when a server goes down or hardware needs configuring, it matters a great deal. Ask specifically where the engineers are based and what the realistic on-site response time is.

GOOD ANSWERS

- A named team or postcode for engineer base locations
- A realistic on-site response time, quoted with specifics
- A local office or registered address, not just a virtual presence
- Engineers who know the local area and local businesses

RED FLAGS

- A national helpdesk with no local engineer presence
- "We have clients in Kent", which is not the same as being based there
- On-site visits that require 2 to 3 days notice and a separate quote
- Engineers who don't know the local geography or business community

ASK THIS EXACTLY

"Where are your engineers physically based? If I needed someone on-site in my town tomorrow morning, is that realistic, and what would it cost?"

WIKITECH'S ANSWERS

WikiTech is **headquartered in Maidstone, Kent**, founded and run by people who live and work in Kent. Engineers are based across Maidstone, Rochester and Otham, with offices in Kent, Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells, South-East London, and Bromley. **Resolute first support means most issues are resolved without a visit**, but when you need someone there, they're genuinely nearby.

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QUESTION 7 OF 9

How long does switching take?

Fear of switching is the single biggest reason businesses stay with IT providers they're unhappy with. Most of that fear is based on bad information, or on what the incumbent provider tells you when they sense you're leaving. A well-managed IT transition takes 2 to 4 weeks and involves almost no disruption to your business. The new provider handles the heavy lifting while you stay working. If a prospective IT company can't walk you through the process clearly, that's a problem in itself.

GOOD ANSWERS

- A clear, documented onboarding process with named stages
- A timeline of 2 to 4 weeks for most businesses
- The new provider takes ownership of the transition
- Business continuity maintained throughout, with no downtime

RED FLAGS

- "The quote complex, you'll need to manage a bit of it"
- A vague timeline with no structured process
- They require your old provider's co-operation before they'll start
- No documented onboarding methodology to share

ASK THIS EXACTLY

"Walk me through exactly what happens from the day I sign to the day you're fully managing my IT. What do I need to do, and what do you handle?"

WIKITECH'S ANSWERS

WikiTech has managed dozens of provider transitions. Our process starts with a discovery call, an onboarding workshop, a detailed project plan, and a multi-businesses test day onboarding in 2 to 4 weeks. We handle all documentation, access transfers, and coordination with your outgoing provider. **Your team stays working throughout**. We also offer a 30-day exit clause in every contract, so you're never locked in.

WikiTech

QUESTION 8 OF 9

Do you send monthly performance reports?

Monthly reporting separates providers who are confident in their performance from those who'd rather you didn't look too closely. You are paying a fixed monthly fee, so you're entitled to see exactly what you get for it: Ticket volumes, response times, resolution rates, open issues, recurring problems. A good IT company should be sending you this data without being asked. If they only offer a satisfaction survey or a vague "everything's running smoothly", ask why they're not sharing the numbers.

GOOD ANSWERS

- A monthly report included as standard, not as an add-on
- Tickets raised, average response time, average resolution time, and SLA compliance
- Recurring issues flagged with proposed fixes
- The same data the provider uses internally

RED FLAGS

- Reporting only available on request, or at extra cost
- Reports with satisfaction ratings but no performance data
- "We'll flag anything important", reactive, not structured
- No ability to share historical data or trend analysis

ASK THIS EXACTLY

"Can you show me an example of the monthly report a current client receives? What metrics does it include?"

WIKITECH'S ANSWERS

Every WikiTech client receives a **monthly performance report** as part of their contract. It includes ticket volume, average first response time, average resolution time, SLA compliance rates, and any recurring issues with recommended actions. **January 2025: 3.3 min avg response under 1 day avg resolution, 703 tickets, 100% SLA compliance**. You see the same numbers we do.

WikiTech

QUESTION 9 OF 9

Is your account manager technical, or a salesperson?

Many IT companies assign a named "account manager" as a selling point. What they don't tell you is that this person is usually a sales contact, not a technical one. Their job is to manage the relationship, upsell services, and escalate technical questions to someone else. A genuine **Technical Account Manager (TAM)** is a senior engineer who knows your environment, attends your quarterly reviews, and can tell you whether a proposed solution actually fits your business, because they understand your infrastructure firsthand.

GOOD ANSWERS

- The TAM is a named senior engineer, not a sales or account role
- Quarterly review meetings with a technical agenda, not just check-ins
- The TAM can answer technical questions directly without escalating
- A technology roadmap discussed and maintained for your business

RED FLAGS

- An account manager with no non-technical background or a sales title
- Reviews focused on contract renewals and upsell opportunities
- A TAM who "coordinates" rather than reviews technically
- No structured quarterly review process in the contract

ASK THIS EXACTLY

"Who would be my account manager, and what is their technical background? Can they answer infrastructure questions directly, or do they escalate to an engineer?"

WIKITECH'S ANSWERS

Every WikiTech client has a dedicated **Technical Account Manager**, a senior engineer, not a sales contact. Our TAMs are Ben Wicker (VMD, developed cloud), Ben Sandford (CTO, cybersecurity, threat), and Nick Abbott (senior engineer, cloud strategy). Quarterly TAM reviews cover our technology roadmap, upcoming changes, and provide strategic recommendations. **No upsell pressure. Solutions are only proposed when they fit.**

3.3 MIN AVG RESPONSE SLA COMPLIANCE 100% 3 yr+ AVG CLIENT TENURE 60 DAY EXIT CLAUSE

Ready to see what good IT support actually looks like?

Book a free 15-minute assessment with a senior WikiTech engineer. We'll look at your current setup, tell you where the risks are, and explain exactly what working with us would look like. No obligation. No hard sell.

Book a Free Assessment