AI Agency Selection Checklist

15 checks to run before you sign with any AI agency in the UK. Tick each one — walk away if too many stay blank.

Scope & approach

- [ ] They ask about your **business problem** before pitching any technology.
- [ ] They put a **written specification** on paper before any build: what it does, what it connects to, what it must never do.
- [ ] They agree a **success measure up front** (hours saved, response time, error rate).
- [ ] They audit your **data quality** before proposing an architecture.

Contract & ownership

- [ ] Your contract states **you own the code, models, data and outputs**.
- [ ] No **vendor lock-in** — you can take the work elsewhere.
- [ ] Pricing is a **full breakdown**: build, cloud, model/API usage, maintenance.
- [ ] They offer a **small fixed-price pilot** before any full build.

UK compliance

- [ ] Fluent in **UK GDPR**; clear on where your data is processed and stored.
- [ ] Can keep processing in **UK/EU regions** if your sector needs it.
- [ ] A written **data processing agreement**: sub-processors named, retention set, no training on your data.

Delivery & after

- [ ] You get the **names of the actual team** building it — no bait-and-switch.
- [ ] A concrete **post-launch support plan** (monitoring, fixing drift).
- [ ] Honest about **limitations** — no "100% guaranteed" promises.
- [ ] They can **integrate AI into your existing systems**, not just build a model.

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