



**DEFENCE
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National Security Vetting

National Security Vetting (NSV). Advice if you have been asked to provide a character reference.

Introduction

This leaflet:

- explains what being a referee involves;
- contains our vetting charter;
- gives answers to the most common questions; and
- tells you how to let us know what you thought of being a referee.

Please read the leaflet carefully, as it will help you to understand how you can help us do our job. If you have any other questions, please:

- visit our website at www.mod.uk/DBSNationalSecurityVetting;
- email us on dva-customersupport-gm@mod.uk; or
- call our Helpdesk on: 01904 662644.

If you want to discuss the arrangements for the interview, or make changes to them, please call our Help Desk on 01904 662644. You can also use this number to confirm the identity of the vetting officer.

What is NSV?

NSV is a requirement set by the Cabinet Office to protect against threats from hostile intelligence services, terrorist groups, organised criminals and other pressure groups. We use NSV to decide whether we can trust people with sensitive government information or property.

Our vetting charter

To make sure we run the NSV process fairly, we have developed our vetting charter. This charter applies to everyone we vet, their referees, and any other people involved in the process.

- We will treat you fairly, openly and with respect.
- You may change your mind about taking part in the vetting process at any time.
- We will keep your information private under the terms of the Data Protection Act.
- We will tell you how you can complain about the process and the decision we make.
- We will interview you in a place, time, and location which we will agree with you.
- If you prefer to be interviewed by a vetting officer of your own sex, age group, or ethnic group, we will try our best to do this.
- You may ask us to justify any questions if you don't understand why we have asked them.
- We will encourage you to provide feedback.

The role of referees

Who are referees?

We ask the person being vetted to choose some character referees who have known them well for a significant, **recent** period in their life, and will be able to provide us with information about the person being vetted. Hopefully they will have asked you for permission first, and made sure that you are willing to be interviewed.

What does being a referee mean to me?

The vetting officer will interview you for information about the person being vetted. After you have received this leaflet, they will first contact you by phone, usually within 10 days. Interviews will usually be face-to-face, but may very occasionally be carried out over the phone. We will always arrange a face-to-face interview if you have sensitive information to share with us, or feel uncomfortable discussing the person being vetted over the phone.

Safeguards and data protection

What choices do I have?

It is entirely your choice whether you want to be a referee. You may change your mind at any time during the process.

The Human Rights Act 1998 made the European Convention on Human Rights part of UK domestic law. This included Article 8, which covers the right to respect for private and family life, the home and correspondence. We must follow Article 8, unless we can show that we have to break this law to protect national security.

The vetting process

How long will the interview last?

Usually about one hour.

What will I be asked at the interview?

The interview will cover most areas of the person's life. We are trying to build up as complete a picture of them as an individual as is possible. We will consider their loyalty, honesty and reliability, and whether they could be more at risk than others of bribery or blackmail. We will ask you about their wider family background (relationships and influences), past experiences, health, sexual relationships and behaviour, drinking habits, experience of drug taking, financial affairs, general political views, hobbies, foreign travel and so on.

The interview will be very searching, but it is not an interrogation and should not feel like one. Some of the questions will be very personal, but we have to ask them to find out if the person we are vetting may be vulnerable to pressure. If you have any doubts about whether some questions are relevant, you should raise these with the vetting officer.

You should be completely honest. The vetting officer will be experienced and will not be shocked or surprised by anything you say. Please do not lie or hide information from us because you think this will help the person who is being vetted. If you lie or hide information, it can raise concerns about the person being vetted.

Providing feedback

Do I have the chance to say what I think about the NSV process?

We want to make sure that the vetting process is carried out efficiently and professionally, and we survey a sample of referees. This feedback is valuable to us and can help to improve the vetting process. If we have sent you a survey form, we hope that you will take the time to fill it in. You do not need to sign the form, but without your details we will not be able to provide you with any feedback.

If you have not received a survey form but would like to comment on your experience of acting as a referee, just ask the vetting officer and they will make sure we send you a form to fill in. You can also find a copy of the survey

form on our website at www.mod.uk/DBSNationalSecurityVetting

If you want to complain about any part of the vetting process you should email dva-customersupport-gm@mod.uk or write to:

The Customer Relations Manager
Defence Business Services National Security Vetting
Imphal Barracks
Fulford Road
York YO10 4AS.

Or if you prefer to have your complaint investigated by someone who is outside of our organisation, you can write to:

Director Business Resilience
Ministry of Defence
Level 6, Zone D
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB.