#National Security Vetting for External Candidates FAQ

This document provides recruiting managers with answers to frequently-asked questions regarding national security vetting for external candidates.

The processes described in this document are under continual review as part of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) “simpler processes” activities. These FAQs will be updated as required.

**Parent topic:** [Personnel security clearances](personnel-security-clearances.md)

##Section 1: Directly employed staff

##Q1. How does the vacancy manager know what level of clearance a role requires?

Vacancy managers **SHALL** always advertise their roles with the correct level of clearance required. Levels of clearance are defined by the requirements of the role being filled, not by the level of clearance the candidate already possesses. Your National Security Vetting Contact (NSVC) can confirm whether your role requires national security vetting in addition to pre-employment checks. Wrongly classifying roles at advert stage leads to delays in on-boarding.

If you don’t know who your NSVC is, see the download [here](/guidance/hr/recruitment/security-vetting/vetting-contact-point-vcp/).

##Q2. What is the pre-employment check process?

This depends on how the candidate is being recruited and their level in the organisation.

**Bands A-F (non-SCS) recruited through fair and open recruitment**

* All candidates **SHALL** undergo pre-employment checks relevant to the role.
* SSCL will inform applicants to bring their Right To Work (RTW), ID and address documentation to interview.
* Line managers **SHALL** check these documents, make a note of the document reference numbers and input these into Oleeo at the Interview Scores Entered stage.
* If the applicant is successful at interview, SSCL will make a provisional offer and ask the candidate to upload copies of the same RTW, ID and address documents into Oleeo.
* If NSV is required for the role (as indicated by the vacancy manager in the advert), SSCL will also send a link to the candidate so they can complete an on-line security questionnaire on the NSVS portal.

**SCS Grades**

* The MoJ SCSBP team work closely with the Government Recruitment Service (GRS), who manage the SCS recruitment campaigns through open and fair competition.
* GRS notify the MoJ SCSBP Team of the successful candidate at interview stage.
* The MoJ SCSBP team contact the candidate to initiate the on-boarding process and send the candidate forms to complete so that SSCL can prepare and issue their contract.
* SCSBP team also arrange a date to meet the candidate and verify their identity documents. These details are used to complete the Clearance Request Form (CRF) and send this to SSCL through the NSVC in the business area.
* Once SSCL process the CRF, a link is sent to the candidate in an email to complete the required security checks on the NSVS portal.

**Non-directly employed staff**

See [Section 2](#X744c674349673ece6a674e5cccf451c1e704a59).

##Q3. How long do the pre-employment and vetting checks take?

Clearances can involve multiple teams depending on the level of check.

If all information and the correct documents have been provided, the timescales are:

* Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS): average six days.
* Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) standard checks: New checks: average five days.
* Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) enhanced checks: New checks: average six days.
* Counter terrorist check (CTC): new checks: minimum six weeks.
* Security clearance (SC): new checks: minimum six weeks.
* Developed vetting (DV): new checks: minimum 18 weeks.

Although the majority of DBS enhanced checks are completed in six working days, in some parts of the country police authorities quote an estimated response time of six to seven weeks.

##Section 2: Staff recruited from external sources (non-directly employed)

As well as any clearance, all staff joining the MoJ from external sources (non-directly employed) are required to complete a BPSS check.

Non-directly employed workers include the following:

* Consultants.
* Contractors.
* Agency staff.
* Fee-Paid workers.

Managers **SHALL** ensure that these applicants undergo the mandatory BPSS checks covering: identity, nationality, immigration, Right To Work (RTW), employment history, and criminal records checks. SSCL will not conduct these checks.

For posts that require NSV:

* The vacancy manager **SHALL** discuss this with their NSVC and obtain a code which needs to be entered on the CRF submitted to SSCL.
* If you don’t know who your NSVC is, see the download [here](/guidance/hr/recruitment/security-vetting/vetting-contact-point-vcp/).
* SSCL only accepts requests with a valid vetting reference code provided on the CRF.
* SSCL sends a link to the candidate so they can complete their on-line security questionnaire on the NSVS portal.

To progress NSV applications, SSCL requires evidence of completion of BPSS checks from the contractor or agency before NSV can be initiated. If you need more information, contact SSCL on 0845 241 5359 (option 1).

##Section 3: National security vetting

##Q1. What is National Security Vetting (NSV)?

There are three levels of national security clearance:

* Counter terrorist check (CTC).
* Security clearance (SC).
* Developed vetting (DV).

These are mandatory for certain job roles and locations throughout the MoJ.

You need the appropriate level of national security clearance if:

* You have a proximity to public figures who have been assessed to be at risk from terrorist attack.
* You work in a role which has the potential to cause significant damage to MoJ or its assets.

##Q2. How long does national security vetting take?

See [Q3, Section 1](#X4cc7c12e2794def6479c6a5cf51f269e5615a5a).

##Q3. National Security Vetting takes too long, can the candidate start at BPSS and apply for NSV once they are in post?

If NSV is required for a position, candidates **SHOULD NOT** start until their NSV is confirmed.

In exceptional circumstances, a policy dispensation request can be made to [mojgroupsecurity@justice.gov.uk](mailto:mojgroupsecurity@justice.gov.uk), who will give a recommendation on whether to grant or refuse the request. Any risk mitigation measures deemed to be required will also be provided for the Senior Security Advisor and the business unit to sign-up to.

Contractors and Agency staff, who **SHALL** have their NSV in place before they start, should contact their NSVC in the first instance. If you don’t know who your NSVC is, see the download [here](/guidance/hr/recruitment/security-vetting/vetting-contact-point-vcp/).

##Section 4: National Security Vetting Applications

##Q1. I submitted an NSV request several weeks ago, how do I see its status?

If you require confirmation of the security clearance level, ask your NSVC who will make enquiries for you. If you don’t know who your NSVC is, see the download [here](/guidance/hr/recruitment/security-vetting/vetting-contact-point-vcp/).

##Q2. SSCL have told me that they have completed sponsors’ actions, what does that mean?

It means that your security questionnaire has been forwarded to United Kingdom Security Vetting (UKSV), and the vetting process has started. All actions are complete at the MoJ, and there are no further actions until UKSV return the file with a decision.

##Q3. Why is the candidate required to fill in forms on the NSVS portal, and provide information that may already be held elsewhere in the recruitment process?

NSV is a separate process and is not HR-related. For legal reasons, we often ask questions to confirm facts. Even if we have that information elsewhere, we still require confirmation. It is usually easier to gather everything we need in one process; the alternative would be to repeatedly ask for further information. Experience has shown that this causes significant delay. We don’t ask for information that we do not need.

##Q4. What if the candidate doesn’t complete specific dates and details for the Security Questionnaire?

All information declared on the Security Questionnaire **SHALL** be completed in full and to the best of the candidate’s knowledge. If certain dates or information are not known, they should include an explanation in the information box provided. Missing or incorrect data delays the application, as the file is referred to a vetting officer who needs to investigate and find the missing data.

##Q5. What happens if the candidate misses information out?

We cannot give too much detail about the vetting process for security reasons. However, we can confirm that your information is checked in a variety of systems and databases. If information is mismatched, it forces the file to be referred to a vetting officer. This intervention causes significant delay. Thirteen percent of all NSV cases are rejected because the subject doesn’t provide their official middle name(s). It is also not unusual for people to put the wrong date of birth.

It is crucial that accurate information is provided. It really helps vet people more quickly.

##Q6. My candidate applied for national security vetting some time ago and hasn’t heard anything, who can I check this with?

SC/CTC each take a minimum of six weeks, with an average of nine weeks. DV takes at least 18 weeks. If this time frame has passed, contact the NSVC who requested the clearance. They can contact SSCL for an update.

If you don’t know who your NSVC is, see the download [here](/guidance/hr/recruitment/security-vetting/vetting-contact-point-vcp/).

##Q7. Why can’t candidates use Apple products to submit the security questionnaire?

NSVS is run by UKSV. There are very strict controls in place to make certain that the information you provide is secure. Apple products work in a different way. UKSV can’t be assured, by Apple, that their platform is secure.

We do not expect that this will change in the foreseeable future.

##Section 5: Changes to roles or personal circumstances

This section contains information for managers and staff who are already in the MoJ, and have changes to their roles or personal circumstances:

##Q1. I am a manager and I think a member of my team needs a national security vetting clearance to do a new piece of work. What should I do?

Talk to your National Security Vetting Contact (NSVC). All business areas that have at least one member of staff who holds Security Clearance should have one. If you don’t know who your NSVC is, see the download [here](/guidance/hr/recruitment/security-vetting/vetting-contact-point-vcp/).

##Q2. My national security vetting clearance is going to expire soon, what should I do?

Speak to your national security vetting contact (NSVC), they will decide if it needs to be renewed and help you start the process off. If you don’t know who your NSVC is, see the download [here](/guidance/hr/recruitment/security-vetting/vetting-contact-point-vcp/).

##Q3. My personal circumstances have changed, who should I advise?

For all changes in personal circumstances, please contact Cluster 2 Personnel Risk Management by emailing: [VettingAftercare@cluster2security.gov.uk](mailto:VettingAftercare@cluster2security.gov.uk). Failure to report relevant changes could result in withdrawal of clearance.

##Contacts

For any further questions relating to security, contact: [security@justice.gov.uk](mailto:security@justice.gov.uk), or for security advice, contact the [Cyber Assistance Team](mailto:CyberConsultancy@digital.justice.gov.uk).

##Feedback

If you have any questions or comments about this guidance, such as suggestions for improvements, please contact: [IT policy content](mailto:itpolicycontent@digital.justice.gov.uk).