#National Security Vetting questions

The processes described in this document are under review as part of Ministry of Justice (MoJ) simpler processes activities and these FAQs will be updated as required.

A downloadable version of this document is available [here](./gs/national-security-vetting-questions.docx).

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

##National security vetting

##What is national security vetting?

There are three levels of national security vetting (NSV) or clearance:

* Counter Terrorist Check (CTC).
* Security Check (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 the MoJ or its assets.

##Can NSV clearance be transferred from another government department?

Candidates cannot choose to transfer their NSV clearance, which lapses on their last day of employment. The MoJ determines what NSV is required for **the new role** and, if necessary, requests that a candidate’s NSV clearance is transferred over before starting a new application for NSV. Not all other government department (OGDs) agree to transfer or share; it is their choice and there are various reasons for transferring or not transferring.

Three scenarios are given here:

* **Scenario 1: The level of clearance required for the new role is the same level the exporting department held for the individual.**
* For example, the new role requires SC clearance, and the candidate’s exporting department held valid SC clearance for them.
* Answer: Transfer can take place provided the exporting department confirms a valid NSV clearance **and** agrees to transfer it to the MoJ. In most cases these transfers can take place. In some exceptional circumstances, departments may refuse to transfer clearance to the MoJ. Where this happens, the candidate is required to complete NSV again.
* **Scenario 2: The level of clearance required for the new role is higher than the level the individual possesses in their current department.**
* For example, the role requires SC clearance and the current department holds CTC.
* Answer: As the level of clearance is higher, the employee is required to complete an application for the new level on the NSV portal. A link is sent to them by SSCL once they have accepted a provisional offer.
* **Scenario 3: The level of clearance required for the role is lower than the current department holds.**
* For example, the employee currently possesses DV clearance with their present department but their new post in MoJ requires SC.
* Answer: For security reasons, the MoJ **CAN NOT** transfer the higher level of clearance as the **role** does not require it. However, information is extracted to ensure that the candidate is not required to re-apply for a lower level of transfer. This is subject to the current department agreeing to transfer.

##Can a candidate start work before applying for NSV?

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 [MoJ Group Security](mailto:mojgroupsecurity@justice.gov.uk), who will provide a request form and then give a recommendation on whether to grant or refuse the request. Any risk mitigation measures deemed to be required (such as plans to segregate the candidate from data that they don’t have clearance to see) will also be provided for the Senior Security Advisor and the business unit to sign-up to.

As a minimum requirement, a candidate **SHALL** have submitted their Security Questionnaire on the NSVS portal. This does not extend to Contractors and Agency staff, who **SHALL** have their NSV in place before they start. If you don’t know who your NSVC is, see the download [here](/guidance/hr/recruitment/security-vetting/vetting-contact-point-vcp/).

##Directly employed staff

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

Vacancy managers must always advertise their roles with the correct level of clearance required. Levels of clearance are defined by the requirements of the role being filled, and not by the level of clearance the candidate already possesses. Your NSVC can confirm whether your role requires national security vetting in addition to the usual pre-employment checks. Wrongly classifying roles at advert stage will lead 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/).

##What is the pre-employment check process?

The checks required depend 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 must undergo pre-employment checks relevant to the role, although staff transferring from OGDs have simplified checks.
* SSCL will ask applicants to bring their Right to Work, ID and address documentation to interview.
* Line managers must 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 National Security Vetting (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 National Security Vetting Service (NSVS) portal.
* If the candidate already has any NSV clearances (and has noted this in their pre-appointment form), it may be possible to transfer these to the new role.

##Bands A-F (non-SCS) recruited as exception to fair and open recruitment

* These include managed moves and loans and are not advertised in Oleeo.
* The vacancy manager should arrange for the individual to bring their original Right to Work, ID and address documentation to be checked.
* The vacancy manager should then submit a Clearance Request Form (CRF) to SSCL recording the details of these documents.
* SSCL send the successful candidate a provisional offer with links to the Lumesse system where they must upload the same documents.
* If NSV is required for the role, the vacancy manager must discuss this with their NSVC and obtain a code which needs to be entered on the CRF. SSCL will only accept requests with a valid vetting reference code provided on the Clearance Request Form.
* SSCL will send a link to the candidate so they can complete their on-line security questionnaire on the NSVS portal.
* If the candidate already has any NSV clearances, it may be possible to transfer these to the new role.

##SCS Grades

* The MoJ Senior Civil Service Business Partners (SCSBP) team work closely with the Government Recruitment Service (GSR), who manage the SCS recruitment campaigns through open and fair competition.
* GSR notify the MoJ Senior Civil Service Business Partners (SCSBP) Team of the successful candidate.
* 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 a contract.
* SCSBP team also arrange a date to meet the candidate and verify their identity documents. These details are used to complete the CRF and send this to SSCL via the NSVC in the business area.
* Once SSCL process the CRF, a link is sent to the candidate via an email to complete the required security checks on the NSVS portal. This process is also used to transfer existing clearances for OGD candidates.

##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 Personal 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 check (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 authorities estimate a response time of six to seven weeks.

##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. SSCL will not conduct these checks and it is the recruiting manager’s responsibility to ensure that they are done.

Further guidance, and a link to the BPSS Verification Form, can be found on the MoJ Intranet [here](/guidance/security/staff-security-and-responsibilities/personnel-security-prior-to-employment/).

Non-directly employed workers include the following:

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

For posts that require NSV:

* The vacancy manager must 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 will only accept requests with a valid vetting reference code provided on the CRF.
* SSCL will send a link to the candidate so they can complete their on-line security questionnaire on the NSVS portal.

To progress NSV applications, SSCL require evidence that BPSS checks have been completed from the contractor/agency before NSV can be initiated. If you need more information contact SSCL on 0845 241 5359 (option 1).

##National Security Vetting Applications

##Why are candidates asked to repeat information supplied 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, and we don’t ask for information that we do not need.

##What happens if the candidate misses information out?

All information declared on the Security Questionnaire must 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 must investigate and find the missing data.

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.

##How do I check the progress of an application?

SC/CTC takes a minimum of six weeks, and DV takes at least 18 weeks. If this time frame has passed, contact the NSVC who requested the clearance, they will contact SSCL for an update.

##Why can’t Apple products be used to submit the security questionnaire?

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

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

##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.

##How do I decide if a new piece of work requires staff to have NSV?

If you need to decide if a new piece of work requires clearance, talk to your 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/).

##How do I renew NSC?

If your, or one of your staff’s, NSC is due to expire soon, speak to your 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/).

##If my personal circumstances change, who do I tell?

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.

You can find more information [here](/guidance/hr/recruitment/security-vetting/reporting-personal-circumstance-changes/).

##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).