# Pre-Employment Screening and Vetting of External Candidates - FAQs

This document describes pre-employment screening and National Security Vetting when recruiting External Candidates.

It answers Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for recruiting managers.

A downloadable version of this information is available [here](./gs/pre-employment-screening-and-vetting-of-external-candidates-faqs.docx).

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

## Section 1: Pre-employment screening for directly employed staff

## Q1. What is pre-employment screening?

Pre-employment screening involves a series of checks to help us make informed decisions about the suitability of people to work for the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and its agencies. These checks ensure:

* Compliance with current legislation, for example evidence of right to work in the UK.
* That applicants are who they say they are.
* The integrity of the applicant, the organisation, and the safety of staff and others in our care.

All individuals working with the MoJ **SHALL** be required to complete a Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) check prior to taking up their role.

In addition, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearances might be required but only where the role involves interaction with children or vulnerable adults. These clearances are carried out through either a Standard or an Enhanced check.

National Security Vetting (NSV) might be required but only where the role requires Counter Terrorist Check (CTC), Security Clearance (SC) or Developed Vetting (DV) clearance. See Section 2 for more information. [NSV](/guidance/hr/recruitment/security-vetting/vetting-contact-point-vcp/) is separate and additional to pre-employment screening checks.

## Q2. What is BPSS?

Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) is the minimum level of clearance for all people working across the Civil Service. A BPSS check comprises of the following components or checks:

* Confirmation of right to work in the UK.
* Confirmation of ID and address.
* Eligibility.
* Criminal convictions.
* Employment history.
* Counter-signatory reference (where relevant).
* Health check (where relevant).

## Q3. How does the vacancy manager know what level of clearance a role requires?

Vacancy managers **SHALL** always advertise their roles at 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 the 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/).

## Q4. What is the process for completing pre-employment checks?

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 ask 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 (the recruitment website), at the Interview Scores Entered stage.
* If the applicant is successful at interview, SSCL makes a provisional offer, and asks 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 also sends 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 Civil Service Resourcing (CSR), now called Government Recruitment Service (GRS), who manage the SCS recruitment campaigns through open and fair competition.
* GSR notify the MoJ SCSBP Team of the successful candidate at interview stage.
* The MoJ SCSBP team contacts the candidate to initiate the on-boarding process, and sends 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 via the National Security Vetting Contact (NSVC) in the business area.
* Once SSCL processes the CRF Form, a link is sent to the candidate by email to complete the required security checks on the NSVS portal.

## Non-directly employed staff

See [Section 2](#X744c674349673ece6a674e5cccf451c1e704a59).

## Q5. How long do the pre-employment and vetting checks take?

Any clearances can involve multiple teams and depend on the level of check.

If all information and the correct documents have been provided, the average time for the checks to be completed is:

* Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS): average 6 days
* Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) standard checks: New checks average 5 days
* Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) enhanced checks: New checks average 6 days
* Counter terrorist check (CTC): New checks minimum six weeks, averaging six weeks
* Security clearance (SC): New checks minimum six weeks, averaging 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 a six to seven week response time.

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

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, employment history, and criminal records checks. They can check the results on the BPSS Verification Record form, which employers **SHALL** complete to verify that the checks have been made.

**Note:** SSCL do not conduct these checks.

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

## If you have posts that require NSV

If NSV is required for the role, the vacancy manager **SHALL** discuss this with their National Security Vetting Contact (NSVC), and obtain a code that is entered on the Clearance Request Form (CRF) prior to submission 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 started. 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 3 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 the MoJ or its assets.

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

Typical timings from completion of application are

* Counter Terrorist Check (CTC): New checks minimum six weeks, averaging six weeks.
* Security Clearance (SC): New checks minimum six weeks, averaging six weeks.
* Developed Vetting (DV): New checks minimum 18 weeks.

## Q3. NSV 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 the Cluster 2 Security Unit (C2SU). Do this by emailing [MoJ Group Security](mailto:mojgroupsecurity@justice.gov.uk). C2SU recommend whether to grant or refuse the request. Any required risk mitigation measures will be provided by C2SU and **SHALL** require the Senior Security Advisor and the business unit to sign-up to these required measures.

Contractors and Agency staff **SHALL** have their NSV in place before they start. For help, contact your 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: Applying for NSV

## Q1. I submitted an NSV request several weeks ago, how do I find out where it is?

Contact the SSCL contact centre on 0845 241 5359 (option 1). SSCL are responsible for the registration and sponsoring of all applications for the NSVS portal.

## 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. There are no further actions until UKSV returns 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 to anything HR-related. For legal reasons, we often have to ask applicants questions to confirm facts. Even if we have that information elsewhere, we still require the applicant to confirm it. It is usually easier to gather everything we need in one process; the alternative would be to repeatedly return for further information. Experience has shown that this causes significant delay, and we don’t ask for information that we would not need.

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

All required information 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, an explanation should be added in the information box. Missing or incorrect data will delay the application because the file will be referred to a vetting officer who will have to investigate and find the missing data.

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

For security reasons we cannot give too much detail about the vetting process; however, we can confirm that information is checked in a variety of systems and databases. If information is mis-matched, it forces the file to be referred to a vetting officer and this intervention causes significant delay. Thirteen percent of all NSV cases are rejected because the subject doesn’t provide their middle name(s) and it is not unusual for people to put the wrong date of birth. It is crucial that accurate information is provided; it really helps vet people quickly.

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

SC/CTC takes a minimum of six weeks and DV takes at least 18 weeks. If this time frame has been passed, contact the National Security Vetting Contact (NSVC) who requested clearance and 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 an Apple machine or iPad to submit the NSV 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 and UKSV can’t be assured by Apple that their platform is secure. We do not expect that will change in the foreseeable future.

## Section 5: Changes to roles or personal circumstances

This section contains information for managers, and for staff who are already in the MoJ, regarding changes to 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 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 NSVC. They 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, contact Cluster 2 Personnel Risk Management by emailing [VettingAftercare@cluster2security.gov.uk](mailto:VettingAftercare@cluster2security.gov.uk).

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).