



Cabinet Office

Government Security Function
70 Whitehall London
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Dame Meg Hillier MP
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

3 March 2023

Dear Chair,

Performance of the UK Security Vetting (UKSV) Service Inquiry: Additional Responses

Thank you again for presenting me with the opportunity to give evidence to the Committee on the performance of the UKSV service. During the session on Monday 6 February, requests for additional information arose during specific exchanges between Committee and panel members. I am therefore writing to provide more detailed evidence in support of the five follow-up actions recorded.

In reference to **Q15** on how we check the footprint of an individual in another country and whether EU exit has had any adverse impact on our activities, UKSV is not experiencing any difficulties or adverse impacts as a result of EU exit.

To enable meaningful checks to be carried out, a subject will normally need to have lived in the UK for a sufficient period of time. Depending on the level of clearance being carried out this will usually range from three to ten years. Whilst a lack of UK residency in itself is not necessarily a barrier to a security clearance, decision makers will need to consider what checks can be carried out and the information available upon which to make a decision. In these circumstances, sponsoring departments are asked to provide a "residency waiver" and evidence such as local criminal records checks which the applicant can source themselves in the same way as required for a visa application¹. All other checks are undertaken as for any other application.

Q20 asked for details of how many cases UKSV were receiving and processing and how long departments were waiting for clearances in 2022. This data is captured within the NAO report and during this period, UKSV actively engaged with customers as the demand pressures became clear and continued to increase in early 2022. This engagement encompassed raising awareness with customers and working with them to manage demand, through the UKSV Service Team and customer communications. At the end of March 2022, UKSV wrote to customers to inform them that we were establishing new demand lanes to address the increase in demand, with Developed Vetting (DV) Initials prioritised in relation to DV Renewals. This message was reiterated in our

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-records-checks-for-overseas-applicants/guidance-on-the-application-process-for-criminal-records-checks-overseas>

monthly customer engagement sessions, through our monthly customer newsletter and in the regular customer meetings with the UKSV Service Team.

Additionally, **Q25** was a query about the number of subjects that we cleared as a priority. This information is included in the NAO report. UKSV's Customer Service team also works closely with all our customers to fully understand and manage their demand requirements. This enables UKSV to gain insights into departmental priorities and understand planned events. Demand lanes are in place to deal with the varying levels of priority requirements. This is managed via the Vetting Board which provides overall oversight of UKSV and comprises UKSV, Cabinet Office and customer representatives. The Permanent Secretary level Government Security Steering Group (GSSG) is also supportive of the approach that UKSV has adopted.

Q31 requested examples of aftercare. One example would be finance-related risks. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic many individuals have found themselves with increased levels of debt. UKSV has therefore re-assessed our risk appetite with respect to individuals whose financial position is potentially unstable. The individual's situation will continue to be monitored throughout the lifecycle of a clearance or until their financial situation is stable. If the situation deteriorates significantly, the clearance may be removed. As part of the Vetting Transformation Programme, this will be significantly strengthened as we move to a continuous assurance model driven by data.

In reference to **Q49**, UKSV closely monitors performance through Management Information (MI) which allows us to assess performance at the individual, departmental or UKSV level. This is reviewed regularly and is used to inform the decision-making process for planning, resourcing and training. We focus on Capacity vs. Productivity to ensure that we are maximising our available resources and are currently building further performance insights and MI as part of our ongoing drive for continuous improvement. Daily, weekly and monthly performance reviews are in place to highlight areas of interest and focus. Each member of staff has a specific target based on the complexity and the type of work they carry out within the business. This is reviewed to ensure each person is equipped in the best possible manner to perform their role. All core delivery staff undertake full-time office based training and only once training is completed, and when the individual meets the productivity and quality standards required, are they able to move into hybrid working. Any dip in performance while undertaking hybrid working would trigger a review. If required, an individual would be requested to attend the office full-time until such time that the performance concerns have been removed. By having this approach in place we are confident that we are setting high standards regardless of location of work, while enabling a progressive hybrid working environment that meets the needs of the business.

I hope that this information is useful to the Committee. Please do not hesitate to contact my office as necessary.

Yours sincerely,

Vincent Devine

Director General & Government Chief Security Officer
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