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National Security Vetting

National Security Vetting (NSV) Advice if you are being vetted by us

Introduction

This leaflet:

- explains what being vetted involves;
- contains our vetting charter;
- gives answers to the most common questions people ask about being vetted; and
- Tells you how to make a complaint about any part of the vetting process.

Please read the leaflet carefully, as it will help you to understand the valuable contribution you can make to the process. Should you have any other questions, please contact your sponsor. If you want to discuss or change interview arrangements, or to confirm the identity of the Vetting Officer, please call the NSV Contact Centre on 01904 662644.

What is NSV?

National Security Vetting (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 you 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 everyone else 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've asked them.
- We will encourage you to provide feedback.

Safeguards and data protection

What choices do I have?

You agreed to take part in the vetting process when you have submitted the security questionnaire. You can change your mind at any time during the process, but this will mean that you can't be employed in a job that needs the level of NSV clearance that you are being considered for.

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 justify our action in the interests of National Security.

How confidential is the vetting process?

We handle all personal information that we have gathered during the vetting process in confidence. In a very small number of cases, if we think we have found a serious risk to national security, we may discuss the case with the relevant security and personnel authorities. In an even smaller number of risky cases, and only where the person being vetted agrees, we may give the department which will employ you some relevant information so they can help manage any risk. There is an extremely remote possibility that we may have to share information we gathered during vetting in connection with criminal or civil proceedings. If you are worried about confidentiality, please contact your sponsor for advice.

The vetting process

What is the Security Check?

A Security Check (SC) is the most common NSV clearance. After we have received your security questionnaire, we will check your details against criminal, credit reference and Security Service records. We may also send for your medical records, and we may interview you. When we have collected all of this information, we will decide whether to approve your application or recommend that it be refused.

What is Developed Vetting?

Developed Vetting (DV) is the highest level of NSV. After we have received the security questionnaire you have filled in, we will check your details against criminal, credit reference, and Security Service records. We may also send for your medical records. We will interview you and your referees. We may also carry out other enquiries if needed. Once we have collected all the information we need, we will decide whether your application should be approved or recommend that it should be refused.

Do I need to be vetted?

You will need a Security Check (SC) if, in the course of your work, you will regularly need access to SECRET and sometimes TOP SECRET (under supervision) information or assets. You will need Developed Vetting (DV) if your work will involve substantial unsupervised access to TOP SECRET information or assets, access to category 1 nuclear material or access to material from other countries and international organisations. If you don't think your job will involve accessing any of this information, you should check with your sponsor whether you need to be vetted.

Why am I being vetted now?

You are either being considered for a job where you will have access to highly sensitive information or assets, or we are reviewing your current security clearance.

I've been vetted before - why do I have to provide lots of the same information all over again?

Due to date protection issues we cannot pre-populate parts of your security questionnaires which we already have information for, but we can provide you with a copy of your previous questionnaire if you contact us on 01904 662644.

Why do you need medical information?

We need to know whether you have suffered from medical or certain psychological conditions that could affect whether you are suitable to handle sensitive information. We may also ask you to have a medical examination. If you don't give us permission to review your medical reports, we may not be able to process your clearance.

What financial information will you need?

Finances are an important part of the vetting process, because if you are in financial difficulty or don't spend money sensibly, you could be at risk of pressure or bribery. Debts such as mortgages, loans or credit card bills will not normally affect your suitability to hold a Developed Vetting clearance, along as you are able to manage the debt. We will consider your financial situation very carefully, and judge each case on its merits. The Vetting Officer will ask you to bring some financial and other documents to the interview (see below for details).

Why do you need my partner's financial information?

This information helps us to understand your joint financial position. Without this information we may not be able to finalise your clearance.

Will you refuse my clearance if I have a criminal record?

We will consider each case individually. It is important to be completely honest about any offences you have committed in the past. Having a criminal record does not automatically mean that we will not approve your clearance.

Where will I be interviewed?

We normally carry out interviews at work, during working hours. You may request to be interviewed at home, and the Vetting Officer will try to do this if possible.

What will I be asked at the interview?

The interview will cover most areas of your life. The Vetting Officer will build up as complete a picture of you as is possible. We have to consider your loyalty, honesty and reliability, and whether you could be at risk of bribery or blackmail. We will ask you about your 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 etc. The interview will be very searching, but it is not an interrogation and should not feel like one. Some of the questions will be intrusive, but we need to ask them to find out whether you might pose a risk. If you don't think a question is relevant you should raise this with the Vetting Officer.

You should be completely honest. The Vetting Officers are very experienced and not easily shocked or surprised. We may refuse your clearance if we later discover that you have lied to us or withheld information.

How long will the interview last?

Usually between two and three hours although this can depend on a number of factors, for example complex finances or large complicated families (it is helpful if you can produce a family tree if this is the case).

What documents will I need to take to the interview?

The following list is not a complete list, but these are the documents that we may need to see and you need to bring them to your interview. All documents should be originals (we will accept internet prints of bank statements). If you don't provide us with these documents straight away, it will take us longer to process your clearance.

General documents

You must bring all of the following documents that apply to you.

- Evidence of identification, for example birth certificate, passport (we may also need this for evidence of where you have travelled), driving licence, and

identity card.

- Deed poll or certificate of declaration if you have changed your name.
- Naturalisation or registration certificate (if you were born abroad).
- Adoption certificate.
- Marriage certificate or civil partnership documents.
- Decree absolute or nisi.
- Separation or maintenance orders.
- HM Forces discharge certificate.
- Utility bills (gas, water, electricity and so on).
- **Financial documents (for you and your partner)**
- We will need:
 - Current account statements for all bank accounts in your name, for at least the last three months;
 - Details and statements for the last three months of all charge cards and credit cards, store and mail-order accounts.
 - Details and statements of all loans and hire purchase agreements;
 - Details of your mortgage and your last mortgage statement;
 - Details of any county court judgments against you;
 - Your last three pay statements;
 - Documents and statements to do with any savings and investments you have; and
 - Other documents which support or help to explain the information you provided on the security questionnaire, and any other financial documents which the Vetting Officer asks to see.

Can I bring a friend or relative to the interview?

Because of the sensitive nature of the interview, most people prefer to be interviewed alone.

Who should act as my referees and what will they be asked?

Please choose someone who has known you well for a significant recent period of your life. Please ask your referees for permission first, and make sure that they are willing to be interviewed. Interviews will usually be face-to-face and last about one hour, but may very occasionally be carried out by phone.

What if you refuse my clearance?

If you are refused a clearance you will be told what actions are available to you.

Will I be told the outcome of the process?

Unless you are being recruited directly into a NSV job, your sponsor will tell you the outcome of the vetting process. If you have a JPA or HRMS account (MOD personnel) your clearance will be recorded on there.

How do I make a complaint?

If you want to complain about any part of the vetting process you should email:

DBS-NSV-Customer-Complaints@mod.uk

Or write to:

DBS NSV Business Manager
Room 235V
Bldg 107
Imphal Barracks
Fulford Road
York
YO10 4AS.

If you would prefer for someone who is outside of our organisation to investigate your complaint, you can write to:

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

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