

Appendix: Security Vetting Processes and Procedures of Not Directly Employed Workers in Prisons

Background

1. Not directly employed workers which include substance misuse workers, Mutual Aid Organisations, Voluntary and Community Organisations and ex-offenders have reported some difficulties in gaining pre-appointment security clearance which has prevented them from gaining entry into prisons.
2. The Government is committed to encouraging greater voluntary sector involvement in providing services to the public sector. These partnership arrangements are important and actions are being taken to make security vetting processes and procedures of not directly employed workers in prisons simpler and better understood by partners.

Criteria for working in prisons

3. [Prison Service Order 3625](#) (Vetting and Testing of Specialist External Drug Workers) sets out the parameters within which substance misuse workers, including mutual aid service representatives, will be approved to work in prisons.
4. High Security Prisons will not usually admit someone who has,
 - received a custodial sentence;
 - a conviction for any offence within the past 5 years (excluding most motoring offences unless causing injury or death);
 - a conviction for any serious offence involving drugs (e.g. importation, possession with intent to supply, cultivation);
 - a conviction for any serious sexual or violent offence; or
 - a conviction for any offence involving children.
5. Non High Security Prisons will not usually admit someone who has,
 - a conviction for importing or supplying drugs;
 - a conviction for any offence in the last 5 years (excluding most motoring offences unless causing injury or death);
 - been released from a custodial sentence in the last 5 years;
 - a conviction for a sexual offence (e.g. rape, indecent assault);
 - a conviction for any offence involving children.

6. Experience has shown that some substance misuse workers have previous convictions for drugs and/or alcohol related offences. This group can make positive contributions to substance misuse treatment in prisons and we would not want to lose their proven skills except when security dictates. It may therefore be appropriate to consider and mitigate, on a case by case basis, any conviction or custodial history that is considered to be irrelevant and unlikely to present a threat to security or control.

Security Clearance – The Vetting Process

7. A new improved vetting process was launched by the NOMS HR Shared Services Centre (SSC) in the autumn of 2010 as part of a [revised recruitment process](#).
8. [Prison Service Instruction 43/2010](#) (“Security Vetting”) describes in more detail the vetting levels required for pre-appointment security clearance.
9. There are 2 routes for progressing a vetting application in order to gain entry into a prison:
 - (i) Via a Prison Vetting Contact Point (VCP) in a prison establishment or business unit; or
 - (ii) Via a Prisoner Action Care Trust (PACT) Vetting Contract Point (VCP); this route is currently in development.
10. **Prison Route** - Prisons must support the vetting process and adopt the following approach:
 - Ensure face to face verification meetings are arranged as soon as possible
 - Vetting application forms to be actioned and dispatched to the SSC within 10 working days of accurate receipt and completion
 - A local record maintained for monitoring purposes including the date vetting forms are sent to applicants, face to face verification meeting date and the date correctly completed forms are dispatched to the SSC
11. **PACT Route** - PACT have been trained to undertake pre-appointment checks, on behalf of NOMS, for voluntary and community sector organisations and then to dispatch completed applications to the SSC. This pilot scheme involves training volunteers from PACT as Vetting Contract Points

Security Clearance – The Timescale

Vetting Timetable Not Directly Employed Workers

Receipt starts Shared Service SLA

Dispatch ends Shared Service SLA

Job role & vetting level identified	Paperwork sent to applicant	Received by prison / PACT	ID & Docs verified	Sent to Shared Service Vetting	Received by Shared Service	Checks undertaken	File passed to Approvals Team for decision	Vetting decision	Decision outcome notified to prison / PACT	Applicant notified of vetting outcome
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Non High Security Timescale	Variable timeframe locally		10 working days	8 working days				Variable timeframe locally		
High Security Timescale	Variable timeframe locally		10 working days	- 8 working days (no CTC) - 35 working days (CTC)				Variable timeframe locally		

Ideally all completed within 10 working days

Prison / PACT Responsibility	Shared Service Responsibility	Prison / PACT Responsibility
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