

CODE OF PRACTICE

Recruiting for vacancies requiring National Security Vetting clearance

Candidates should not, as a rule miss out on employment opportunities because they do not hold an existing security clearance at the application stage. This Code of Practice describes HMG and the recruitment industry's shared commitment to ensuring vetting requirements are applied fairly. It has been developed via The Association of Independent Professionals and the Self Employed (IPSE) [Security Clearance Forum](#), with Cabinet Office and other government departments, associated bodies and agencies.¹

Departments, recruiting managers and government suppliers will:

1. Undertake effective succession planning to identify forthcoming vacancies; ensuring that any requirements for NSV clearance are appropriate and that sufficient time for vetting is provided for.
2. When advertising vacancies, make clear when security clearance is required and to what level; make clear that people with no security clearance will always be considered, where appropriate.
3. Have a process for approving any exceptions to guard against bad practice. Leaving it too late is not adequate grounds for an exception.²
4. Expect individuals to collate in advance the information required for vetting to help speed up the clearance process; impress upon successful appointees that the speed of processing a clearance is dependent on them completing their vetting forms as soon as possible.
5. Make it clear in recruitment guidance and when publicising vacancies that individuals may start work whilst a NSV clearance is being processed in some instances (with appropriate supervision, with the pre-employment check (the Baseline Personnel Security Standard) or lower levels of NSV).
6. Have clear complaints procedures for breaches of guidance, for example, via the Cabinet Office [Mystery Shopper Scheme](#).

¹ Further information on the procurement and value for money implications of advertising only for pre-cleared contractors can be found in the Cabinet Office's security notice ['Advertising for individuals with existing security clearances'](#).

Routine breaches of government procurement guidance can be reported to the Cabinet Office [Mystery Shopper Scheme](#). Results of investigations are published online.

² Forward planning should take into account estimated timescales for clearance - typically 20 days for Counter Terrorism Check (CTC) and Security Clearance (SC) clearances from receipt of completed paperwork and longer for Developed Vetting (DV).

Recruitment agencies will:

7. Not shortlist based on existing clearance or any pre-conception of what clearance involves.
8. When advertising vacancies, clarify when security clearance is required and to what level. Make clear that people with no security clearance will also be considered, where appropriate.
9. Only take an existing clearance into consideration where there is a justifiable exception.
10. Refer candidates to the [HMG Personnel Security Controls](#) and IPSE guidance, which explains the requirement and process.
11. Help clients and candidates in order to provide information required to facilitate clearance being granted or transferred.
12. Make candidates with existing security clearances aware of the guidance on transfer of clearances, i.e.:
 - Clearances do not transfer automatically. It is at the discretion of the hiring organisation, following an assessment of relevant information;
 - No more than one year can have elapsed between leaving one organisation and joining another which requires security clearance;
 - Residence overseas for more than 6 months (within the one year period) may be a factor.

Contractors will:

13. Be aware of the Cabinet Office guidance on security clearance provided in the document [HMG Personnel Security Controls](#).
14. Take responsibility for knowing individuals' clearance status/ expiry dates.
15. Refer to IPSE guidance regarding the information which will be needed, in order to complete vetting forms.
16. Speed up the vetting process by ensuring that all of the information required is available and submitted to the vetting authority in a timely manner.