

developed vetting

**your
questions
ANSWERED**

DEVELOPED VETTING - YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

SECURITY VETTING

Security vetting is regulated by the Government's statement of vetting policy, announced in Parliament by the Prime Minister on 15 December 1994, which came into effect on 1 January 1995.

Why is a vetting system necessary?

The security vetting system is a key element of protective security. It is necessary to counter threats to national security from:

- foreign intelligence services;
- those who wish to overthrow or undermine Parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means
- terrorist groups; and
- individuals whose reliability is in doubt because:
 - they may be susceptible to pressure or improper influence;
 - they have shown dishonesty or lack of integrity;
 - they have demonstrated behaviour or are subject to personal circumstances which indicate unreliability

What is the aim of the vetting system?

Its aim is to ensure that the character and personal circumstances of an individual are such that he or she can be trusted with sensitive Government information or assets.

Who is affected?

The system applies to all Crown Servants as well as to others (e.g. members of the armed forces, the police and some contractors and consultants) whose employment involves access to sensitive Government assets.

How does the vetting system work?

Checks are carried out only so far as is necessary to safeguard national security in the light of the current assessment of threats to security. All candidates for posts which are subject to security vetting are asked to complete security questionnaires. These explain the purpose of the process and set out in full the Government's statement on security vetting policy. You will be asked to provide the personal details required for the necessary checks to be carried out.

What is Developed vetting?

Developed Vetting (DV) is the most comprehensive form of security vetting in the UK and it comprises the following:

- a basic Check of identity;
- the completion of security questionnaires;
- a check against the criminal records of the UK and, if appropriate, other countries;
- a financial check, including a check with a Credit Reference Agency;
- interviews with your character referees conducted by an Investigating Officer. The referees will normally (though not necessarily) be people nominated by you, who know you well enough in one capacity or another to talk about your background, character and personal circumstances, as well as your academic and employment record and performance. Typically they will be your personal friends, tutors, employers and line-managers.

The Service will exercise the greatest care to ensure that all information collected during the vetting process is accurate, for example that there is no confusion over identity when criminal record checks are carried out.

Are all these long forms really necessary?

The questionnaires may look daunting but most questions are fairly straightforward. You should read through the forms to find out what is required, collect together the information and allow plenty of time for completion. You must answer all questions - if you do not do so it may delay the decision about your clearance. If you are unsure about a question, please ask for guidance from whoever issued you with the forms. If you realise after returning the completed form that you have inadvertently made a mistake, please tell the Investigating Officer when you are interviewed. Otherwise, any errors or omissions could be held against you during the assessment process.

I used to be politically active. Will it affect my DV clearance?

Previous political activity will have implications for your clearance only if you have been involved with an organisation which advocates, or has in the past advocated the overthrow of Parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means. If you think there might be a problem, declare this on the form and you will be given every opportunity to explain the situation when you are interviewed. Your suitability for clearance will be decided on the overall picture, not on one isolated piece of information.

Why should I provide confidential medical information?

You may be required to undergo a medical examination as part of the recruitment process to confirm your fitness for employment in the UK and overseas. However, from the security perspective, we also need to know whether you have suffered from certain medical and psychological conditions which could have a bearing on your fitness to handle very sensitive information. The form explains how the information will be obtained and safeguarded: briefly, it will be held by the Service Medical Adviser and only in very exceptional circumstances will any part of it be made available to anyone else. The Investigating Officer will, however, ask you about your general health to establish whether there are any factors that might affect your suitability for high level clearance. We require the name and address of your GP, whom the Medical Adviser may contact. If you are not sure of the answer to a question, or would prefer that it is obtained from your GP, you may say so on the form or discuss the matter at the medical examination. If you refuse consent to medical reports being obtained in this way, it may have implications for your vetting clearance.

What is the purpose of a Financial Check?

Its purpose is to assess whether you are or have been in serious financial difficulty, or show signs of financial irresponsibility to the extent that you could become vulnerable to financial inducement. There is no need to worry about mortgage, credit card or other liabilities (e.g. student loans) where these are in line with your ability to manage the repayments.

What does a Financial Check entail?

You will be asked to complete a separate form about your personal financial circumstances. You will also be asked to obtain (against reimbursement) a copy of the file held in your name by a credit reference agency. Additionally, the Investigating Officer is likely to ask you questions about your financial situation during the interview.

What will I be asked at the interview?

The interview will be wide-ranging and cover most aspects of your life. The aim is to obtain a rounded picture of you as an individual to determine whether you will be able to cope with access at the highest levels of security classification and not become a security risk. In the event that you consider the information gathered about you to be misleading or inaccurate, the interview will provide you with an opportunity to correct or clarify this. You should expect to be questioned about your family background, past experiences, health, sex life, drinking habits, experience (if any) of drug use, your financial affairs, general political views (though not what party you support), hobbies and interests, foreign travel and foreign connections. All the questions are asked for a purpose and you should be as frank as possible. The Investigating Officer will be experienced in conducting such interviews, so it is unlikely that anything you say will cause shock or surprise and every effort will be made to put you at your ease. If you would feel more comfortable discussing certain matters with a different investigating officer, someone of your own sex, for example, say so and, if necessary, efforts will be made to arrange a second interview. Be as candid as possible. It is in your interests that the correct decision is reached.

I'm tempted to keep quiet about something in my past and hope no-one finds out.

Lying or concealing information on a vetting form or at interview (e.g. about your previous use of drugs) will be viewed very seriously indeed, because it will be taken as evidence of unreliability and/or dishonesty. Indeed, your clearance could be refused because you lied, even though what you were seeking to conceal would not in itself have caused a problem. Furthermore, your clearance could be removed at a later date if the lie subsequently comes to light. It is simply not worth it.

Whom should I name as referees?

You should name people who have known you well over a significant period of your life. They will be asked to describe you and your way of life, attitudes, abilities etc. The Investigating Officer will be trying to verify and complete the information provided by you. If potential problem areas have emerged, your referees may, depending on the circumstances, be asked about them, provided this does not breach any undertakings of confidentiality you have been given.

What do I do if I think the DV process was conducted unfairly or improperly?

If you think that any aspect of the DV enquiries has not been carried out properly, you should ask your Recruitment Officer or the Investigating Officer for the opportunity to speak to a senior Vetting Officer. If you wish to take your concern further you may complain to the Tribunal established under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, whose address is as follows:

Investigatory Powers Tribunal
PO Box 33220
London
SW1H 9ZQ

Telephone 020 7273 4514

Who decides whether a DV clearance will be granted?

The Service will make the decision in the light of all the available information obtained during the DV process.

Will I be told whether a clearance has been granted?

A confirmed offer of appointment will mean that DV clearance has been granted. Unsuccessful candidates will not automatically be told whether clearance has been granted, as this will not necessarily be a relevant factor in the decision not to employ them.