

Security screening of individuals employed in a security environment — Code of practice

ICS 13.310

Committees responsible for this British Standard

The preparation of this British Standard was entrusted to Technical Committee GW/3, Manned security services, upon which the following bodies were represented:

Association of British Insurers
Association of Chief Police Officers
Association of Security Consultants
British Bankers' Association
British Security Industry Association
Ex-Police in Industry and Commerce
Home Office
International Professional Security Association
Joint Security Industry Council
MD Resolution Security
Metropolitan Police
National Security Inspectorate
Security Industry Training Organization
Security Industry Implementation Unit
Security Systems and Alarms Inspection
Co-opted Members

The following were also represented in the drafting of the standard through Technical Panel GW/3/-/4, Security screening:

Criminal Records Bureau
Office of the Information Commissioner

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Foreword

This British Standard was prepared by Technical Committee GW/3. It supersedes BS 7858:1996, which is withdrawn.

Performing security screening will necessitate the processing of personal data. Attention is drawn to the Data Protection Act 1998 (see Annex C), and *The Information Commissioners Code of Practice: Employment records*. Further details can be accessed via www.dataprotection.gov.uk.

This British Standard was drafted in consultation with the Security Industry Authority (SIA). Further details can be accessed via <http://www.the-sia.org.uk/>.

As a Code of Practice, this British Standard takes the form of guidance and recommendations. It should not be quoted as if it were a specification and particular care should be taken to ensure that claims of compliance are not misleading.

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

Compliance with a British Standard does not of itself confer immunity from legal obligations.

In particular, attention is drawn to the following statutory regulations:

- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 [1]
- Rehabilitation of Offenders (Scotland) Act 1974 [2]
- Rehabilitation of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 [3]
- Data Protection Act 1998 [4]
- Criminal Justice Act 1961 [5]
- Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1963 [6]
- Electronic Communications Act 2000 [7]
- Private Security Industry Act 2001 [8]
- Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 [9]
- Employment Act 2002 [10]

Summary of pages

This document comprises a front cover, an inside front cover, pages i and ii, pages 1 to 21 and a back cover.

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1 Scope

This British Standard gives recommendations for the security screening of individuals to be employed in an environment where the security and safety of people, goods or property is a requirement of the employing organization's operations and/or where such security screening is in the public interest.

NOTE Property includes intellectual and physical property.

2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this British Standard, the following terms and definitions apply.

2.1

ancillary staff

individuals involved in ancillary activities such as administration, personnel, building maintenance and cleaning

2.2

confirmed employment

employment (beyond the period of provisional employment, if any) granted upon successful completion of security screening and any additional criteria applied by the organization

2.3

organization

company, establishment, government or local authority department, or other body employing individuals in an environment where the security of people, goods or property is a significant consideration

2.4

provisional employment

initial period of employment for a new individual during which security screening is continuing

NOTE Successful completion of security screening is one criterion upon which the decision to grant confirmed employment is based.

2.5

relevant employment

employment which involves, or may involve, the acquisition of, or access to, information or equipment, the improper use of which could involve the organization, any client of the organization, or any third party, in a security risk

NOTE 1 The definition applies to individuals irrespective of whether they are engaged full-time or part-time, or on a permanent or temporary basis.

NOTE 2 Further guidance on individuals considered under relevant employment can be found in *The Information Commissioners Employment Practices Data Protection Code — Part 1: Recruitment and Selection* [11].

2.6

screening controller

individual in an organization responsible for security screening

2.7

security screening period

period of not less than 10 years immediately prior to the commencement of relevant employment or transfer to relevant employment, or back to the date of ceasing full-time secondary education, if this date is more recent

2.8

writing

legible document (hardcopy document or electronically stored document capable of being printed) from an individual whose identity is verified

NOTE For verification of identity of signatories to electronic documents, attention is drawn to the Electronic Communications Act 2000 [7].

3 General

3.1 The organization should not employ individuals whose career or history indicates that they would be unlikely to resist the opportunities for illicit personal gain, or the possibilities of being compromised, or the opportunities for creating any other breach of security, which such employment might offer.

3.2 The organization should not employ individuals who, where required, cannot produce a valid work permit or visa.

NOTE Attention is drawn to the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 [9].

3.3 The organization should make clear to all individuals employed in security screening (see Clause 10), and to those with authority to offer provisional or confirmed employment, that high standards of honesty and integrity should be maintained in view of the special circumstances of the environment in which they are employed.

Individuals employed in security screening should also be mindful of the difference between personal opinion and fact when recording information about individuals.

3.4 Although no system of security screening can provide absolute security, the organization should use every endeavour to ensure that the integrity of its personnel is established and maintained.

NOTE In some cases, the application of this British Standard might prevent employment or cause dismissal, because the verification procedures cannot be completed satisfactorily. It is emphasized that this should not necessarily be taken as an indication of unsuitability; it might simply not have been possible to obtain the required positive evidence.

3.5 The organization should carry out security screening in accordance with this British Standard prior to the engagement of individuals for relevant employment or to their being transferred to relevant employment from other duties for which they have not previously been subjected to security screening in accordance with this British Standard.

3.6 The organization should ensure that security screening in accordance with this British Standard has been carried out on all individuals already in relevant employment.

3.7 This British Standard should be applied equally to all individuals in relevant employment including full-time and part-time employees, temporary and permanent employees, and to all levels of seniority, including directors. The full security screening procedure should be carried out in the case of individuals regardless of their previous employment, even if that employment was in a security environment.

NOTE Attention is drawn to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 [1] (see Annex A).

4 Security screening process

4.1 General

The organization should inform individuals being screened that their personal data will be used for the purposes of security screening.

All individuals should have a personal interview prior to any offer of employment being made.

The organization should obtain documentary evidence of background, experience and character for all individuals.

The screening controller should ensure that private and confidential data about individuals being security screened is held confidential unless authorized in writing by the individual being security screened.

NOTE 1 Attention is drawn to the Data Protection Act 1998 [4].

The authenticity of security screening information is important and organizations holding security screening information electronically or otherwise should be able to demonstrate that appropriate measures are in place to prevent alteration.

NOTE 2 Attention is drawn to DISC PD 0008.

4.2 Screening file

A screening file should be established for each individual subject to security screening (see Clause 11).

4.3 Provision of information

All individuals applying for relevant employment and all existing employees transferred to relevant employment from other duties should be required to provide the following in writing.

- a) Details of their education, employment, periods of self-employment, unemployment and gaps in employment throughout the screening period.
- b) The names of at least two individuals, from whom a character reference can be requested (see 4.5).
- c) Details of all cautions or convictions for criminal offences, including motoring offences and pending actions.
- d) Details of all bankruptcy proceedings and outstanding court judgments for debt.
- e) An acknowledgement that misrepresentation, or failure to disclose material facts, either during application or throughout employment may constitute grounds for immediate dismissal and/or legal action.
- f) A statement signed in the presence of the interviewer, authorizing an approach to former employers, government departments, individuals providing character references, etc. for verification of a continuous record of their career and history.

NOTE 1 An example of the text that can be used is given in Annex B, Form 5. Form 5 can be used as a separate form or as part of the application form.

NOTE 2 If necessary, individuals may be reassured that a current employer will not be contacted until written permission from the individual is obtained.

- g) Assistance in obtaining a continuous record of evidence in writing confirming that there is nothing in their background which would reflect adversely upon their suitability for the proposed employment.

If permission to contact a current employer is withheld until an offer of provisional employment is made, the individual should be informed that it is a condition of the offer of provisional employment that the offer will be withdrawn if the security screening is not concluded satisfactorily.

4.4 Continuous record of career and history

For security screening purposes, the organization should establish by direct reference to former employers, government departments, educational authorities, etc., with confirmation from them in writing, details of education, employment, periods of self-employment, unemployment and gaps in employment of the individual being security screened for the whole of the security screening period on a month-to-month basis (see Clause 6).

In addition, the organization should enquire whether former employers would re-employ the individual.

4.5 Character references

The organization should obtain two character references, with confirmation in writing, from individuals with personal knowledge of the individual being security screened. Each character reference should confirm that nothing is known about the individual being security screened which would reflect adversely upon their suitability for the proposed employment.

The individual providing the character reference should be asked to confirm the nature of their relationship with the individual subject to the security screening and that they have known the applicant for a minimum of 2 years within the past 5 years.

Character references should not be obtained from relatives of the individual being security screened.

Wherever possible, a character reference should be requested from the most recent past employer of the individual being security screened (see 4.3, Note 2, regarding contacting an individual's current employer).

NOTE Effective security screening is dependent upon those having knowledge of the individual being security screened supplying information and references. It is hoped that individuals and organizations will co-operate in supplying information and references in respect of their past employees when requested to do so, unless there are good and substantial reasons for not doing so.

4.6 Verification of information

For security screening purposes, verification of the following should be sought, confirmation obtained in writing and copies retained (see Clause 11).

a) Current place of residence, e.g. by provision of an original utility bill, bank statement, driving licence etc. which bears the individual's address.

b) Date and place of birth; the birth certificate (not a photocopy) of the individual being security screened should be seen to verify name, date of birth, etc. For individuals who changed their surname (e.g. by marriage or deed-poll), the relevant certificate (not a photocopy) should also be seen. Alternatively, military service documents, an EU driving licence with photographic identification or a valid passport can be used to confirm identity.

c) Date of leaving full-time, secondary education; in the case of individuals who state that they ceased full-time secondary education less than 10 years prior to the application for employment, the written record should confirm the date of leaving. For those who left an educational establishment at the end of a school year (summer term), the period up to 1 November of that year may be considered as part of the school career; for those leaving at other times of year, the period of grace should be limited to two months. If verification is not possible with the educational establishment, the date of leaving should be confirmed by the referees.

d) Periods and type of employment (e.g. full time, part time, casual or occasional); obtained from previous employers, although reference to a current employer should not be made without the individual's prior written permission.

e) Periods of registered unemployment; obtained from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), or other government agencies. Where a government department states that records are not available, the period for which the record is not available should be treated as a gap (see Clause 6).

f) Periods of self-employment; obtained from the Inland Revenue, Customs and Excise (VAT), bankers, accountant, solicitor, trade or client references, etc., as appropriate. Evidence should also be obtained confirming that the individual's business was properly conducted and was terminated satisfactorily.

g) Periods of residence abroad; obtained where possible by, e.g. approaches to employers, confirmation of dates obtained from passports and work permits by contact with appropriate embassies and consuls.

NOTE 1 Inability to trace an employer or a DWP record might be due to false information being given to cover a period serving a spent prison sentence (see Annex A), which the individual being security screened is legally entitled not to disclose. However, legislation does not entitle anyone with a spent conviction to make a false claim of employment, etc., and rejection or dismissal could be justifiable on the grounds of misrepresentation, i.e. rejection or dismissal in these circumstances would be because false information was given, not because of failure to disclose a spent conviction.

It might be necessary for individuals to provide certain information about themselves in order to complete the verification procedures. Care should be taken to ensure that the information supplied is genuine.

Where a discrepancy appears during the security screening of an individual, the individual should be invited by the organization to make representations about the discrepancy.

NOTE 2 For recommendations on how to process gaps in the record of career and history, refer to Clause 6.