

BRITISH STANDARD

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

ICS 13.310



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Foreword

Publishing information

This British Standard comes into effect on 1 January 2007 and was prepared by Subcommittee GW/3/-/9, *Security screening*, under the authority of Technical Committee GW/3, *Manned security services*.

A list of organizations represented on GW/3/-/9 can be obtained on request to its secretary.

BS 7858:2006+A2:2009 supersedes BS 7858:2006+A1:2007 which is withdrawn.

The start and finish of text introduced or altered by Amendment No. 2: 2009 is indicated in the text by tags **A2** **A2**. Minor editorial changes are not tagged.

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 revision takes account of the Private Security Industry Act 2001. The Act requires that any person engaged in licensable activities, as designated in the Act, be licensed in accordance with the Act. It is an offence to engage in licensable conduct when not in possession of the appropriate licence. This edition introduces criminality checks if the activity undertaken is not licensable, requires organizations to combat identity theft and fraud, introduces credit reference checking, and addresses the increasing frequency with which employees change jobs.

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/>.

Use of this document

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.

Any user claiming compliance with this British Standard is expected to be able to justify any course of action that deviates from its recommendations.

Presentational conventions

The provisions of this standard are presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Its recommendations are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is “should”.

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type, and does not constitute a normative element.

The word “should” is used to express recommendations of this standard. The word “may” is used in the text to express permissibility, e.g. as an alternative to the primary recommendation of the clause. The word “can” is used to express possibility, e.g. a consequence of an action or an event.

Notes are provided throughout the text of this standard to give references and additional information that are important but do not form part of the recommendations.

Contractual and legal considerations

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 cannot 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]

Human Rights Act 1998 [13]

Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 [14]

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 1 Property includes intellectual and physical property.

A2 *NOTE 2 See Home Affairs Committee First Report: The Private Security Industry Volume 1 [15] **A2***

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 years immediately prior to the commencement of relevant employment or transfer to relevant employment, or back to the age of 12 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, visa or accession state worker registration card within the timescales required by law.

[A2] *NOTE Attention is drawn to sections 15 to 26 of the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 [14].* **[A2]**

3.3 The organization should make clear to all individuals employed in security screening (see Clause 8), 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 security screening period should be not less than 5 years; however, organizations should lengthen the security screening period (see 4.8) to cater for:

- a) contractual or legislative considerations;
- b) specific industry standards.

3.7 The organization should ensure that security screening in accordance with this British Standard has been carried out on all individuals already in relevant employment. Employees already screened to previous editions of this Standard need not be re-screened.

3.8 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 and that any documents presented to establish identity and proof of residence may be checked using an ultra violet scanner or other method to deter identity theft and fraud. The organization should also inform the individual that any original identity documents that appear to be forgeries will be reported to the relevant authority.

NOTE 1 Examples of authentic documents, such as an SIA licence, passport and visa stamps, can be found on Government department web sites. For SIA licensing, refer to www.the-sia.org.uk.

NOTE 2 Information relating to the prevention of illegal working can be found in “Changes to the law on preventing illegal working: short guidance for United Kingdom employers”, published by the Home Office [12].

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 are held confidential unless authorized in writing by the individual being security screened.

A2 *NOTE 3 Attention is drawn to the Data Protection Act 1998 [4] and the Information Commissioner’s Employment Practice Code [16], and the need to comply with any obligations in the Code.***A2**

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 4 Attention is drawn to BIP 0008-1.

4.2 Screening file

A screening file should be established for each individual subject to security screening (see Clause 9).

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 sign the application form declaration (see Annex B, Form 5) and to provide the following.

- a) Proof of identity and address of residence; the documents that should be presented are listed on the SIA website (<http://www.the-sia.org.uk/>) and conform to the SIA requirements for licensing. The presentation of a valid and current SIA licence satisfies this recommendation, and copies of the documents should be retained in the screening file.
- b) Details of their education, employment, periods of self-employment, unemployment and gaps in employment throughout the security screening period.
- c) The names of two individuals with personal knowledge of the individual being security screened, from whom a written character reference can be requested. Each character reference should confirm that nothing is known about the individual being security screened which would reflect adversely upon their suitability for the employment concerned.

The individuals providing character references should be asked to confirm the nature of their relationships 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 and/or persons residing at the same address as the individual being security screened.

- d) Details of all cautions or convictions for criminal offences, including motoring offences and pending actions, subject to the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 [1] (see Annex A).
- e) Details of all bankruptcy proceedings and court judgments.
- f) 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.
- g) A statement authorizing an approach to current and 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, which 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 permission from the individual is obtained.