



Expert commentary

BS 7858:2019 — *Screening of individuals working in a secure environment — Code of practice*

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Overview

BS 7858:2019 is now in its fifth edition as a standalone British Standard, with the first edition having been published in 1996, however that edition was based on an appendix of the security guarding standard published in 1991. By becoming a separate code of practice, it allowed the guidance on screening to be expanded to cover prospective employees across the whole security industry. The title has now been changed from 'Security screening of individuals employed in a security environment' to 'Screening of individuals working in a secure environment' to open it to a wider audience and also make it clear that it isn't just directly employed individuals.

Reasons for change

The main reason for change was to reflect the changing practices in screening, based on what experience had shown to be useful to the procedure, the more frequent use of outsourcing, the typical scenarios when looking at an individual's history, and the available resources.

Summary

The BS 7858:2019 edition introduces a more risk-based approach, similar to that of some management systems standards, e.g. ISO 9001.

There is also more emphasis on the allocation of resources, ongoing training for screening staff, and additional guidance for scenarios where an individual has not been in direct employment.

Additional changes reflect other resources available to the screening administrator and also the removal of some previous requirements which were considered as not beneficial to the process.

Organizations should however remember that the process of screening is about making a decision based on an applicant's past behaviour which can be used as a guide to their likely future behaviour.

Main commentary

Clause 4 Top management commitment

Clause 4 introduces a top management commitment including allocating resources, infrastructure and support.

An organization will need to demonstrate that screening administrators have sufficient time to conduct processes, and that where the administrator needs to require external resources, e.g. public financial information checks, that these services are available.

Clause 5 Risk management

The statement on managing the risk of employment now additionally emphasizes the risk of a breach of confidentiality, trust and safety.

Clause 6.2 Training

Training is now required to include the potential consequences of not meeting the requirements. For many companies, compliance with the standard can be a requirement of their insurance cover and/or contractual requirements, hence not complying with requirements can leave the organization at a significant financial risk and damage to its reputation. Individuals involved in screening need to understand the risk of not following the standard.

There is a new requirement for an annual competency review for screening administrators and screening controllers. It is the organization's choice as to how this will be done but should be designed to ensure that competence is maintained.

There have been additional requirements added with respect to how training records are maintained, in particular relating to online training.

Clause 6.3 Outsourced screening

This clause now clarifies that where an organization outsources their screening, they are outsourcing the administration of the process, and the organization is still responsible for compliance with the standard and ensuring that the work done by