

BS 7858:2019

Incorporating Corrigendum No. 1



BSI Standards Publication

Screening of individuals working in a secure environment – Code of practice

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Published by BSI Standards Limited 2022

ISBN 978 0 539 22293 7

ICS 13.310

The following BSI references relate to the work on this document:

Committee reference GW/3

Draft for comment 19/30380860 DC

Amendments/corrigenda issued since publication

Date	Text affected
December 2022	C1: See Foreword

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Summary of pages

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Foreword

Publishing information

This British Standard is published by BSI Standards Limited, under licence from The British Standards Institution, and came into effect on 30 September 2019. It was prepared by Technical Committee GW/3, *Private security management and services*. A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its committee manager.

Supersession

This British Standard supersedes [BS 7858:2012](#), which was withdrawn on 31 March 2020.

Information about this document

Text introduced or altered by Corrigendum No. 1 is indicated in the text by tags Ⓒ1 Ⓒ1. Minor editorial corrections are not tagged.

This is a full revision of the standard, and introduces the following principal changes:

- the scope has been widened to allow this British Standard to be used effectively in other industries outside of the recognized security sector for any employees undertaking work in a secure environment;
- there is now more emphasis on risk assessment and this is a theme that runs through the standard;
- there is now a clear objective to obtain pertinent background information to enable organizations to make an informed decision, based on risk, on employing an individual in a secure environment;
- there is more importance placed on the role of top management in the screening process, i.e. in deploying appropriate resource to ensure the process is effective and taking responsibility for the acceptance of risk (while top management remains responsible for the execution of the provisions of this British Standard, it is recognized that authority can be delegated to competent individuals to undertake specific tasks);
- it has been clarified that the organization retains ultimate responsibility for an outsourced screening process and is required to review the completed screening file;
- there is a recognition of the role of automation;
- the requirement for character references has been removed as this was seen to be too easy to abuse;
- while social media and other open source internet checks are now mentioned, they are not a provision of the standard and can only be used as additional information in any employment decisions. Care is to be taken when using this method so as not to introduce any unlawful discrimination; and
- the forms in [Annex A](#) are now informative and are therefore examples of forms that could be used, which allows organizations to customize them more easily.

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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.

It has been assumed in the preparation of this British Standard that the execution of its provisions will be entrusted to appropriately qualified and experienced people, for whose use it has been produced.

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.

Where words have alternative spellings, the preferred spelling of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary is used (e.g. “organization” rather than “organisation”).

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Introduction

This British Standard provides organizations who engage individuals working in a secure environment with a methodology to reduce risk exposure in terms of their human resources and to give a high level of confidence in recruiting and the setting to work of individuals.

This methodology of screening individuals takes a top down approach, i.e. responsibility for this process remains with top management. Top management can delegate accountability for certain roles and tasks; however, they remain responsible for this process.

This methodology is driven by risk and it is incumbent on the organization to apply risk management good practice when deciding how this methodology is implemented into their organization's processes so that it consistently delivers the desired outcomes.

It is important that the organization ensures that all individuals employed in the screening process (see [Clause 6](#)), and those with the authority to offer employment, maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in view of the special circumstances of the environment in which they are employed.

1 Scope

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

NOTE 1 "Property" includes intellectual and physical property as well as cash and valuables.

NOTE 2 Some insurers require [BS 7858](#) as a part of the policy conditions and have additional requirements for screening, e.g. a longer screening period.

This British Standard applies equally to all individuals in relevant employment, including full-time and part-time employees, sole traders, partnerships, temporary and permanent employees, and to all levels of seniority, including directors. The objective of screening is to obtain sufficient information to enable organizations to make an informed decision on employing an individual in a secure environment.

This British Standard does not cover the other elements of recruitment and selection that take place when employing people. It is assumed that screening would be an additional process added to existing recruitment and selection processes; for example, this British Standard does not cover the application process, right to work status or specific competency in the job role.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

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

3.1 ancillary staff

individual(s) involved in support activities

NOTE Examples of support activities include administration, personnel, building maintenance and cleaning.

3.2 conditional employment

period after limited screening has been completed and employment has commenced ahead of the completion of full screening

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

3.3 confirmed employment

employment granted upon successful completion of full screening and any additional criteria applied by the organization

3.4 individual

person to whom screening applies

NOTE An individual might be new to the organization or an existing employee transferring roles within the organization.

3.5 limited screening

along with information required and preliminary checks, the minimum amount of screening necessary to be completed satisfactorily before an offer of conditional employment can be made

3.6 organization

person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its objectives

NOTE The concept of organization includes, but is not limited to, sole trader, company, corporation, firm, enterprise, authority, partnership, charity or institution, or part or combination thereof, whether incorporated or not, public or private.

3.7 outsource

arrangement where an external organization performs part of an organization's function or process

3.8 process

set of interrelated or interacting activities which transforms inputs into outputs

3.9 relevant employment

employment which involves, or can involve, the acquisition of, or access to, data, information, assets 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 The definition applies to individuals irrespective of whether they are engaged full-time or part-time, on a permanent or temporary basis, and/or employed directly or as subcontractors.

3.10 screening administrator

individual within an organization engaged in screening or a third party providing screening services

3.11 screening controller

individual within an organization responsible for making sure that the screening process is being carried out correctly

3.12 screening form(s)

system or document used to gather and record information required to carry out screening

3.13 screening period

period of not less than five years immediately prior to the commencement of relevant employment or transfer to relevant employment, or back to the age of 16 if this date is more recent

3.14 subcontractor

company, agency worker(s), individual(s) and temporary worker(s) not directly employed by the organization, contracted to carry out work on behalf of the organization

3.15 top management

person or group of people who directs and controls an organization at the highest level

NOTE Top management has the power to delegate authority and provide resources within the organization.

4 Top management commitment

Top management should:

- a) be committed to satisfying the recommendations of this British Standard;
- b) ensure that the resources and infrastructure needed for the screening process are available;
- c) direct and support persons to contribute to the effectiveness of the screening process; and
- d) ensure that the responsibilities and authorities for relevant roles are assigned and communicated within the organization.

5 Risk management

The organization should only employ individuals whose career or history indicates that they would be suitable for the role, given that such employment might allow opportunities for illicit personal gain, or the possibilities of being compromised, or opportunities for creating any other breaches of confidentiality, trust and safety.

NOTE 1 Attention is drawn to UK employment law, commercial insurance cover and the applicable terms and conditions of employment.

NOTE 2 In some cases, where the verification procedures cannot be completed satisfactorily, employment might be prevented, terminated or an employment offer withdrawn. It is emphasized that this is not necessarily an indication of unsuitability; it might simply not have been possible to obtain the required positive evidence.

6 Individuals employed in screening

6.1 General

The screening controller(s) and screening administrator(s) should be screened in accordance with the recommendations of this British Standard. An individual should not screen themselves.

The screening controller(s) and screening administrator(s) should sign a confidentiality agreement (sometimes known as a non-disclosure agreement), covering both the period of employment and post-employment, relating to the disclosure of the organization's confidential information and/or material with respect to individuals and employees past, present and future.

Where the tasks of interviewing, screening and deciding whether to employ and whether to terminate employment are carried out by separate departments, all departments should be co-ordinated, with particular attention given to the division of functions and authority between each department for internal control purposes.