

**SSD SECURITY CLEARANCE PROCEDURES**

**Background**

1. The purpose of this document is to set out the procedures for security clearance of contractors’. This Note is not intended to advise clients on the necessity for, or appropriate levels of, clearance. The client should direct those queries to the client’s own Assistant Departmental Security Officer (ADSO). This note should be read in conjunction with NICS HR Security Clearance Guidance for Contractors; [CPD new work request form | Department of Finance (finance-ni.gov.uk)](https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/cpd-new-work-request-form)
2. Security clearance is the responsibility of the client. The client’s ADSO shall determine the appropriate level of security clearance required for all contractors’ personnel on a contract by contract basis.
3. The scope of this note is confined to security requirements for individuals contracted to provide goods and services.
4. SSD staff must work with client Departments, Agencies, NDPBs or others to establish the required level of security clearance for all their sites. It should be noted that Departmental Security Officers (DSO) have no direct responsibility for security within NDPBs and therefore NDPBs must be consulted directly.
5. DoF NICS HR will not process any national security vetting clearances or make decisions on criminal records for any bodies outside of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). NICS HR will therefore only process Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) level and national security vetting clearances for those contractor employees who will be engaged in work within a NICS Department or Executive Agency. NICS HR will no longer process or make vetting decisions for any non-departmental public body, arms length body, further education body, health trust or council. The NICS does not make decisions on direct recruits to any of these bodies therefore this change is aligning the treatment of contractors to that of direct recruits.
6. It is recognised that, in collaborative arrangements, contractor staff may be engaged in work at both NICS and NDPB sites. To avoid duplication of costs, CPD has requested that NDPBs do not request additional checks if these have been already completed by NICS HR.
7. In line with the above, access to the Contractor Vetting Database will also be restricted to relevant personnel. This includes DSOs and ADSOs and any additional NICS premises staff to whom a DSO or ADSO grants access for the purpose of verification of contractor staff at point of entry.

**Level of Disclosure and Period of Validity**

1. The client will advise the SSD Procurement Officer on the level of security clearance required at the initiation stage of the procurement competition. SSD will include the requirements and the agreed level of disclosure in the tender documents so that the contractor is aware of the correct request to make to AccessNI to obtain the appropriate Criminal Record Disclosure Certificate.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**SSD Procurement Officer**

9. The Procurement Officer must:-

* Seek confirmation of the level of security clearance required from the client at the initiation stage of the project.
* Ensure appropriate clauses are contained within each contract detailing the contractor’s obligations in respect of obtaining and maintaining valid security clearance for all personnel working on the contract.
* Allow for the following indicative periods to be included in the project programme for security clearance:-
  + Baseline Personnel Security Standard – based on Basic Disclosure – 2 weeks;
  + Baseline Personnel Security Standard – based on Standard Disclosure – 2 weeks;
  + Baseline Personnel Security Standard – based on Enhanced  Disclosure – 4 weeks; and / or
  + Counter Terrorist Check (CTC) - 16 weeks;
  + Security Check (SC) – 16 weeks
  + Developed Vetting (DV) – 24 weeks (depending on level of service required).

These periods are based on present indications from AccessNI and UK Security Vetting (UKSV) to process requests, but will depend on the contractor submitting the relevant information on a timely basis. NICS HR processing time is additional to above times.

* Include statements in the letter of award of contract that the contractor –
  + Shall ensure that only those individuals (whether employed directly or as part of a sub-contract) whose security clearance has been confirmed to the contractor by DoF’s NICS HR, are permitted access to any site or undertake any work associated with the contract, along with appropriate notification;
  + Shall contact NICS HR by e-mail at [securityvetting@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:securityvetting@finance-ni.gov.uk) to agree arrangements to take forward the security clearance process for the appropriate level of clearance;
  + Advise on the estimated number of personnel to be checked.
  + Advise the Client to notify NICS HR at [securityvetting@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:securityvetting@finance-ni.gov.uk) to inform them that a contract has been awarded which requires security clearance to be carried out.

**Notification at Contract Award Stage**

10. SSD will complete the Handover Document which will include the details necessary to allow the Client to notify NICS HR with details of:-

* + Project Title;
  + Project Number as appropriate;
  + Date contract commences;
  + Date contract expires;
  + Contractor’s name, address and point of contact ;
  + Proposed number of clearances required

If a contract is extended NICS HR must be notified by email to [securityvetting@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:securityvetting@finance-ni.gov.uk).

**Security Clearance must not be a Barrier to Procurement Opportunities**

11. The Cabinet Office has issued guidance which advises that, for legal and policy reasons, security clearance cannot be carried out speculatively. This means that contractors (or individuals) should not be prompted to obtain security clearance unless they have been awarded a specific contract where security clearance is a genuine requirement.

12. Project Managers must not attempt to make pre-existing security clearances a pre-requisite for a tenderer to apply for work, nor should this be employed as a means to attempt to reduce the overall length of the tendering process.

**General Requirements and Further Information**

13. All information relating to security clearances must be dealt with in a confidential manner and any information related to personal data must be clearly marked and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act and the AccessNI Code of Practice

14. The NICS has adopted the guidance principles for recruiting people with conflict–related convictions. Any conviction for a conflict-related offence that pre-dates the Good Friday Agreement (April 1998) should not be taken into account unless it is materially relevant to the employment being sought.