

What is BPSS Vetting and Screening

What is BPSS Vetting, what does it cover and who needs it.



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A practical guide to the Baseline Personnel Security Standard

****BPSS (Baseline Personnel Security Standard)**** is the recognised pre-employment screening standard used for people who will have access to UK government assets, information or services.

It provides organisations with a consistent way of establishing a person's ****identity, employment history, right to work and relevant criminal record information**** before they are given access to potentially sensitive environments.

BPSS is not a security clearance in itself. Instead, it provides a ****baseline level of assurance**** about an individual's identity, background and suitability.

Who is BPSS screening for?

BPSS is commonly required for people working with, or on behalf of:

- * UK government departments
- * Government agencies
- * Defence and government contractors
- * Public-sector organisations
- * Suppliers with access to government information, systems or assets
- * Organisations operating within government supply chains

It may also be adopted by organisations outside government where a similar level of pre-employment assurance is considered appropriate.

What does a BPSS check include?

BPSS screening is based around four core areas, often remembered using the acronym ****RICE****.

R - Right to Work

Confirmation that the individual has the legal right to work in the UK.

The evidence and method used will depend upon the individual's circumstances and the current Home Office requirements.

I - Identity

Verification of the individual's identity using appropriate documentation and information.

The objective is to establish confidence that the person being screened is genuinely who they claim to be.

C - Criminal Record

A criminal record check is undertaken at the appropriate level for BPSS screening.

This is normally a ****Basic DBS check**** in England and Wales, or the relevant equivalent where appropriate.

A Basic DBS certificate shows ****unspent convictions and conditional cautions**** held on the Police National Computer at the time the check is completed.

E - Employment History

The individual's employment and activity history is checked for a ****minimum of three years****.

This can include periods of:

- * Employment
- * Self-employment
- * Education
- * Unemployment
- * Overseas residence or employment
- * Other periods where the individual's activities need to be established

Any significant gaps or inconsistencies should be investigated and satisfactorily accounted for.

Is BPSS the same as security clearance?

****No.****

BPSS is a pre-employment screening standard and does not provide formal national security clearance.

Higher levels of national security vetting may be required for particular roles, depending upon the information, systems or environments an individual will access.

BPSS will often form the foundation upon which further security vetting is carried out.

How long does BPSS screening take?

There isn't one fixed timescale.

Completion depends on factors including:

- * How quickly the candidate supplies accurate information
- * Availability of identity and Right to Work evidence
- * Employment reference response times
- * Criminal record check processing
- * Overseas employment or residence

* Gaps or discrepancies within the candidate's history

A well-completed application with straightforward employment history will generally progress much faster than one containing missing information or periods that require further investigation.

What happens if there are gaps in someone's history?

A gap does not automatically mean that somebody fails BPSS screening.

The important point is that the period is ****identified, investigated and satisfactorily accounted for****.

For example, an individual may have been travelling, unemployed, caring for a family member or living overseas.

Good screening is not simply about collecting documents. It is about understanding the individual's history and resolving inconsistencies before a screening decision is made.

Does BPSS expire?

BPSS should not simply be regarded as a certificate that remains valid indefinitely.

Organisations remain responsible for managing personnel security risk throughout an individual's employment or engagement.

Changes in role, access, circumstances or lengthy breaks in service may mean that information needs to be reviewed or screening repeated.

BPSS isn't just a collection of checks

One of the most important distinctions is between ****buying individual checks**** and carrying out a proper screening process.

A DBS check, Right to Work check and employment references may all form part of BPSS, but

completing those checks individually does not necessarily mean that an organisation has completed an effective BPSS screening process.

The information needs to be considered together.

Dates should make sense. Gaps should be understood. Discrepancies should be investigated. Evidence should be recorded.

That is where experienced screening and compliance judgement becomes important.

BPSS and BS7858 - what's the difference?

BPSS and BS7858 are sometimes confused because both involve pre-employment screening.

****BPSS**** is primarily associated with government, public-sector and government supply-chain personnel security.

****BS7858**** is a British Standard for screening individuals working in secure environments and is widely used within the UK private security sector and related industries.

The screening requirements, history periods and processes are different, so organisations should establish which standard or contractual requirement applies to the role.

A simple BPSS checklist

Before considering BPSS screening complete, you should be able to demonstrate that you have:

- * ☐ Confirmed the candidate's identity
- * ☐ Established their Right to Work in the UK
- * ☐ Completed the appropriate criminal record check
- * ☐ Verified at least three years of employment/activity history
- * ☐ Identified and investigated relevant gaps
- * ☐ Resolved material discrepancies
- * ☐ Recorded the evidence used

* [] Retained an appropriate audit trail

* [] Made and documented the screening decision

Need help with BPSS screening?

Checking Your Staff provides BPSS vetting and screening support to organisations that need a reliable, auditable approach to pre-employment screening.

But our role isn't simply to complete checks.

Our team helps clients understand ****what needs checking, why it needs checking and what to do when the information doesn't quite add up.****

That's the difference between running checks and applying screening expertise.

****Checking Your Staff****

Employee Vetting - Screening - Compliance - Expertise

The Knowledge Hub

Practical guidance from people who work with employee screening and compliance every day.

This resource is intended as general guidance and should not be treated as legal advice. Organisations should always check the latest government guidance and any contractual or sector-specific screening requirements that apply to them.