



Force Vetting

Frequently asked questions

Introduction

The below frequently asked questions should address many of the questions that commonly arise. If there are any questions you would like answered that are not covered, feel free to contact Force Vetting.

The success of the vetting process largely depends on individuals disclosing all relevant information so that potential risks can be effectively managed. Therefore it is paramount that participants understand this process.

What is the vetting policy within Gloucestershire Constabulary?

Vetting is an integral part of the recruiting process for employment, internal job moves, contractual work or volunteering. The Vetting Policy for Gloucestershire Constabulary mirrors the requirements set out in the National Vetting Code of Practice. The Code of Practice mandates that police personnel and those who require unescorted access to police premises should all hold the minimum vetting clearance for their role.

The vetting process is also in compliance with Articles 1, 8 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The aim is to ensure that checks are carried out in a proportionate manner, only insofar as is necessary to safeguard the force's intelligence, financial and operational assets along with government national security assets.

While everyone agrees that the vast majority of police personnel have the highest standards of honesty and integrity, there are very few occasions that an individual falls short of those standards. This adversely affects the entire force, both internally and in terms of public perception and reputation. Vetting clearances must be granted before an individual is appointed. This is because the vetting process can uncover information that shows that the individual is unsuitable to serve in the police service. The policy is applied to protect employed staff and non-police personnel who occupy vulnerable posts within the force, and to provide Gloucestershire Constabulary with a degree of assurance as to an individual's reliability and trustworthiness.

Why is a vetting system necessary?

Criminal investigations conducted at national and international level have provided evidence that criminals actively target the police to obtain information, which could be used to assist them to further their criminal activities. Members of the press and employees of private detective agencies also target police staff to obtain confidential information. Another security risk is the potential for criminals or their associates to infiltrate the work force. Additionally, the increased amount of information held by and accessible to the force, means that the organisation needs a greater assurance in the integrity of their employees and those coming onto police sites than ever before.

In addition, the Police Service is required to carry out National Security Checks for those in certain sensitive posts to counter threats, which may stem from foreign intelligence services and terrorist groups.

Who requires a vetting clearance?

Vetting applies to all employed staff, volunteers and other non-police personnel who are engaged in support of Gloucestershire Constabulary or who work in associated partnerships. The extent to which vetting is undertaken is balanced against the level of access required to police premises, sensitive information and computer systems.

There are processes in place to ensure that every reasonable effort is made to allay any fears and to tackle sensitive issues that may arise. Everyone will have to take part in the process. Individuals who fail to comply with the process will have their vetting clearance withheld. Their application for employment or appointment will also be discontinued. Vetting clearances can also be withdrawn if it is shown that incomplete or inaccurate information was provided and, as a result, a misconduct investigation might ensue.

How does the vetting system work?

You will be asked to complete a number of forms to provide personal information and confirm your identity and place of residence. For roles requiring enhanced vetting, you will receive a more in depth vetting form to provide financial information and / or details for national security checks to be completed.

Details are checked against criminal and national security records, other public records such as the electoral role and, in some cases, credit reference agencies and open source research. Enquiries are also made with other agencies as required.

The results are assessed taking account of the information we obtain. Suitability is considered against the role, access required to premises, information and systems, and the degree of supervision.

Vetting clearances only last for a set period of time upon which the clearance must be reviewed.

Can checks be carried out if I have not been resident in the United Kingdom?

It can be difficult to complete thorough checks on individuals who have not been resident in the United Kingdom for the previous three years.

Therefore, to comply with national guidance, except in very exceptional circumstances a three year residency is an essential requirement. Please contact Resourcing on 01452 754353 if you wish to discuss this further.

Do I have to complete the procedure?

Should you decide, for whatever reason, that you are unable to complete any particular sections of the questionnaires, or do not wish to do so, you should discuss the matter with

your line manager, Gloucestershire Constabulary Resourcing Team or Force Vetting Unit. This should be done before submitting forms to Force Vetting.

In some cases it may be necessary for you to be interviewed by the Vetting Unit prior to any decision as to vetting clearance. The objective of the interview is to obtain sufficient information to allow vetting clearance and to discuss any difficulties which may arise.

It must be remembered that persons not vetted under this procedure will be denied unrestricted access to force premises, information or systems. For contractors this could affect the ability to meet their obligations and such risk remains with the contractor; no liability is assumed by the force. It is mandated that in order to be employed by the force you are required to hold the minimum level of police vetting.

It is important to note that the success of the vetting process relies heavily on understanding and supporting the process to ensure that any potential vulnerabilities are identified and appropriately managed. It is in no shape or form an attempt to victimise or to 'weed people out' of the organisation. It is simply a process to provide evidential assurance in all personnel.

Can I work within the police service if I have criminal convictions or cautions?

Public confidence may be affected if a person working in policing has a conviction or caution. There is a rebuttable presumption, subject to the conditions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, that a person will not be suitable to hold vetting clearance if they have a conviction or caution for a criminal offence, especially if it:

- relates to dishonest or corrupt practices
- relates to violence
- demonstrates a targeting of persons due to their vulnerabilities or protected characteristics

Factors that may weigh against this presumption being applied in individual cases include:

- the nature and severity of the offence the person's age at
- the time they committed the offence
- the length of time since the offence was committed

Each case must be considered on its own merits, including both the individual's role in the offence and the nature of the conviction or caution.

Vetting clearance for a police officer, a special constable or a member of police staff is to be rejected in all cases where either:

- offences were committed as an adult or juvenile that resulted in a prison sentence (including custodial, suspended or deferred sentences and sentences served at a young offenders' institution or community home)
- the individual is, or has been, a registered sex offender or is subject to a registration requirement in respect of any other conviction.

If you need further advice, please contact the Force Vetting.

What is meant by the term 'criminal association'?

Criminal association relates to the association with persons who may or may not have a criminal record, engaged in criminal activities, have come into adverse police contact at any time, or those who associate with such persons.

It is possible that some individuals belong to clubs, associations and organisations where fellow members fall into the above-mentioned category. If this information is known to the applicant it should be included. In addition, if you have friends or relatives who fall into this category, their details must also be included.

Under no circumstances should you, or anyone at your request, carry out checks to ascertain whether or not any of your associates have criminal convictions, or are recorded as being actively engaged in crime.

What is the purpose of financial enquiries?

Financial checks are not completed for all posts but, when applicable, their purpose is to assess whether you have direct or indirect access to sufficient funds to minimise the risk of vulnerability to financial inducement.

It is in this context that details of an individual's and partner's finances are required. However, if you are not aware of the extent of your partner's finances and your partner will not disclose this information to you, you must indicate this in the questionnaire and include as much information as possible.

Individuals are most vulnerable when they have debts or other relevant factors which have not been disclosed. When the information has been provided 'in confidence' the risk of compromise is significantly reduced.

There is no need to worry about mortgage and credit commitments that are in line with your income, providing you are normally able to manage the repayments. Debts only become a problem where they are substantial and individuals fail to take remedial action or where they are caused by compulsive behaviour, such as gambling.

When considering an application requiring financial checks, applicants that can show they have and are adhering to debt management arrangements and IVA's may be considered. Documentary evidence should be provided to demonstrate the commitment and adherence to any such debt management arrangements.

However, applicants should not be considered if they:

- have existing county court judgments outstanding against them
- have been registered bankrupt and have not discharged their bankruptcy

Why do I have to provide details of my identity and residency?

Identity and residency checks are an essential part of the vetting process, including national security clearance checks, and for this reason you will be asked to present original documents such as passport, driving licence, birth certificate, utility bills and bank statements. These will be examined and copies taken for retention by Force Vetting.

What if I keep quiet about something in my past and hope no-one finds out?

Knowingly providing false information or concealing information on a vetting form or at any subsequent interview could be regarded as evidence of unreliability and / or dishonesty. Indeed your clearance could be declined because of this, even though what you were seeking to conceal would not itself have caused a problem. Furthermore, your clearance could be removed at a later date if the facts subsequently come to light.

Remember – it is only in the most serious cases that consideration will be given to declining vetting clearance. The main objective of the vetting procedure is to ensure that individuals cannot be compromised because they have ‘secrets’ they do not wish to be disclosed.

Do I have to notify changes to my personal circumstances?

It is the individual’s responsibility to ensure that all significant changes to their personal circumstances are reported to Force Vetting. Significant changes include a permanent partner, new residents at your home, change of address, arrests, cautions or convictions, or association with criminals should be notified to the Force Vetting. Any associations with criminals should also be reported to the Anti-Corruption Unit.

Types of Security Clearance

There are currently two types of vetting procedures in operation. ‘National Security Vetting’ is designed to protect government assets and ‘Force Vetting’ has been designed to protect police assets. ‘National Security Vetting’ and ‘Force Vetting’ are separate procedures, designed to counter specific threats. ‘Force Vetting’ considers wider and more comprehensive threats than ‘National Security Vetting’ and is therefore must be completed prior to ‘National Security Vetting’ enquiries being initiated.

Force Vetting

Force Vetting is applied to those who are required to have unsupervised access to police premises and assets (including information, systems or premises).

There are three different types of Police Vetting clearances:

- Recruitment Vetting (RV)
- Management Vetting (MV)
- Non-Police Personnel Vetting (NPPV)

Recruitment Vetting (RV)

RV is the initial vetting process for police officers, police staff and members of the Special Constabulary and is the minimum level of check acceptable to ensure access to police assets, estates and information. The purpose being to protect the police service and force by ensuring that only those who demonstrate the highest standards of conduct, honesty and integrity are recruited or appointed.

Management Vetting (MV)

MV specifically relates to those individuals who will be required to undertake posts within designated sensitive areas have been assessed as to their honesty, reliability and

integrity. These sensitive areas are those with access to sensitive police information, intelligence, financial or operational assets. The procedure therefore serves to reduce the risks of unauthorised disclosure, or loss of, sensitive police assets.

Non-Police Personnel Vetting (NPPV)

NPPV relates to the vetting of individuals not employed by the Constabulary. These individuals are people who are required to access to police premises without constant supervision and/or police assets either through direct or remote access.

There are four different types of NPPV: Level 1, Level 2 (abbreviated), Level 2 (full) and Level 3.

National Security Vetting (NSV)

National Security Vetting includes the clearances 'Counter Terrorist Check (CTC)', 'Security Check (SC)' and 'Developed Vetting (DV)'. The purpose of 'National Security Vetting' is to protect sensitive government national security assets, by providing an acceptable level of assurance as to the integrity of individuals who have access to protectively marked government assets and/or who require access to persons, sites and materials, at risk of terrorist attack.

Relationship between Police Vetting and National Security Vetting (NSV)

Within the police service, NSV clearances are underpinned by the relevant level of police vetting. The relevant level of police vetting should be successfully completed and clearance granted, prior to the NSV clearance being initiated.

How long does the vetting procedure take?

The amount of time it takes to process a vetting application varies depending on the level of clearance required. Every application is unique and has numerous variables. Force Vetting work with many departments, police forces and government agencies when processing these applications. If an application takes longer than expected, this is not necessarily an indication that something adverse has been found.

The below table shows an indication how long it takes to process each level of clearance. This time starts from the moment Force Vetting receive the completed questionnaire. Whilst the majority of applications will be processed within this timeframe, there is no guarantee that a clearance will be successfully concluded within that time. For any clearance that also require a national clearance, please note this is outside of our control but below gives an average of how long it takes on top of the force vetting clearance.

Type of clearance	Time to process
NPPV 1	4 weeks
NPPV 2 (abbreviated)	5 weeks
NPPV 2(full)	6 weeks
NPPV 3	8 weeks
RV	6 weeks

Type of clearance	Time to process
MV	8 weeks
For clearances that also require a National Clearance	Additional 8 weeks

If the individual needs to give any notice, the forms are required to be with Force Vetting the required time before that notice period starts.

If there is a force priority for an individual to start as soon as possible requests can be made for expedited vetting. These requests must be sent to the Head of Professional Standards with a rational why it is organisational critical.

All new applicants must complete at least the force vetting element before that can start with the organisation. If the role is organisational critical and the role also requires a national clearance. You can request a derogation form from the Vetting Manager. It will be the decision of the DCC if the applicant is allowed in without the national part of the clearance. This is only for exceptional circumstances.

How long will my vetting last?

A vetting clearance only lasts for a set period of time. These timelines are highlighted below and also provided in the APP of the Vetting Code of Practice.

Personal circumstances are often subject to change over a period of time and therefore an individual's risk to the organisation will fluctuate throughout the length of their career or role with the force.

The vetting process itself has gone through significant changes, particularly over the last couple of years with the introduction social networking checks. As a result the vetting process has become more robust and necessarily intrusive to identify potential risks.

It is important to understand that a renewal of your vetting is not simply a review of criminal convictions and cautions; it is a risk management process. The vetting process for a lapsed clearance is the same as a new application, from the authentication to the checks conducted. It is important for the organisation to have continued assurance in all police personnel and those who are not employed by the force, hence a post-employment vetting programme is just one tool designed to provide that assurance.

Type of vetting	Duration
Recruitment Vetting (RV)	10 Years
Counter Terrorism Check (CTC)	10 Years
Management Vetting (MV)	7 Years
Security Check (SC)	10 Years
Developed Vetting (DV)	7 Years
Non-Police Personnel Vetting Level 1 (NPPV 1)	Up to 3 Years

Type of vetting	Duration
Non-Police Personnel Vetting Level 2 (abbreviated) (NPPV 2 Abbreviated)	3 Years
Non-Police Personnel Vetting Level 2 (full) (NPPV 2 full)	3 Years
Non-Police Personnel Vetting Level 3 (NPPV 3)	5 Years

A renewal of vetting clearance requires a full application to be completed and all required checks pertinent to that particular level of vetting must be redone.

I already hold a clearance with another organisation or wish to re-join, can I transfer it?

When those working in policing apply to transfer to another force (which is serviced by a different vetting unit), the parent force will provide all relevant information on the transferee requested, to enable an effective assessment of risk in the process of conducting a full re-vet of the transferee.

If an individual applying to transfer is currently subject to a misconduct investigation, agreement to the transfer must be sought from the Head of Professional Standards or the appropriate authority, for both the parent force and receiving force.

If a transferee is declined, then the force making that decision must notify the parent force of that decision and their reasons. A review must take place by the parent force.

Those applying to re-join policing, having left, for example, through retirement or other employment, must be fully re-vetted prior to commencing working in policing.

Where there is a delay in employment or service, and where this has not commenced within six months following a vetting clearance being given, the individual must be re-vetted. Vetting should take place as late as possible in the recruitment process to ensure that any current risks are assessed.

If vetting clearance is declined, can I appeal?

Vetting clearances can be declined or withdrawn at any level. A letter will be sent to the applicant informing them why they have been declined a clearance. There are some occasions where under the Data Protection Act 2018, the applicant cannot be informed the reasons of the decline. The process is outlined in the decline letter. The appeal is viewed by a senior officer not involved in the original decision.

Appeals or reviews should be requested within 14 days of the decision being made.

Where NSV clearance is withdrawn by forces, information regarding an appeal to SVAP should be given to the individual. If an individual refuses to engage in the vetting process, their vetting clearance should be declined or withdrawn.

If a person working in policing is unable to hold the required vetting clearance to perform their role, the force will consider an alternative suitable role with a lower level of vetting clearance. If such a role is not available or clearance cannot be granted at the lowest level, the individual will be subject to dismissal proceedings, as vetting clearance is a requirement of their role.

How is vetting information stored and protected?

The information provided as part of the vetting process is held by Force Vetting in line with the Data Protection Act and Government Security Classification (GSC) and Management of Police Information (MOPI) guidelines. The information will only be used for the purposes of vetting and is stored in a secure database.

How is vetting information shared?

The information obtained during the vetting process will not be disclosed to any outside agency, unless it is legally obliged to do so. All information sharing between Force Vetting and other units within Professional Standards is on a strict 'need to know and use' principle.

Who do I contact for advice?

Write to: Force Vetting, Gloucestershire Constabulary, 1, Waterwells Drive, Quedgeley, Gloucester, GL2 2AN

Email: force.vetting@gloucestershire.police.uk