

## Advertising for individuals with existing security clearances

**Issued to Departmental Security Officers and Human Resources, Finance and Procurement Directors on 23 January 2013 for information and action as appropriate.**

### Partner Bulletin

#### Purpose:

To remind Departments that they should not require prospective appointments or contractors to have existing security clearance other than in exceptional circumstances.

Over-reliance on appointments with existing security clearance costs more (some 25%) and encourages reliance on larger incumbent suppliers (making it harder for departments to meet government aspirations on procurement from SMEs).

#### Background:

1. Cabinet Office policy stipulates that government departments, their prime contractors and recruitment agencies should not require existing security clearances as pre-requisites when procuring contracts or recruiting contractors. Any exceptions must only be made when a vacancy arises at short notice and is urgent, or the appointment is of very short term duration.
2. Departments have previously reported compliance with this policy, but we continue to see significant numbers of non-compliant advertisements, particularly for IT contracts. We receive a steady stream of complaints from members of the public and via MP correspondence to Ministers.
3. It is estimated by members of the Recruitment and Employment Confederation that departments that rely on existing clearances overpay by 25%. Since departments and agencies spent some £700 million last year on contractors and external resourcing, non-compliance with policy has significant value for money implications. As large companies can ensure that their staff security clearances are regularly renewed, this impacts on the government's aspiration that 25% of its procurement should be from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

4. National Security vetting clearances can generally be processed quickly, particularly for Counter-Terrorist Check (CTC) and Security Check (SC) clearances. The vetting providers are also working on ways to further speed up the Developed Vetting (DV) process. These improvements are not, however, being matched by reductions in the number of existing clearances being required.

**Action:**

5. The key problems are: recruiting managers not leaving themselves enough time for appointments; a tendency to seek a higher level of clearance than is needed; and overestimation of the time and cost of vetting procedures.
6. We would like to reiterate: 1) the importance of forward planning when identifying vacancies for contractors. The typical times for clearances are 20 days for CTC and SC clearances and your HR procedures will need to ensure these timelines are incorporated in recruitment guidelines; 2) the importance of identifying the proportionate level of clearance for posts – and hence of departments making sure guidance on this is widely disseminated and easily found and (3) that vetting clearance can be processed quickly (as above) and cost effectively between £36-£48 for SC clearances and £36-£43 for CTC clearances. It is also often possible for contractors to have certain access in advance of clearance being granted, following the completion of recruitment checks (i.e. Baseline Personnel Security Standard).
7. Finance Directors should note the cost implications of failure to comply with policy in this area. Procurement Directors should also be aware of the impact on departments' procurement from SMEs (given that reliance on contractors with existing clearance tends to favour larger and incumbent suppliers).
8. Cabinet Office continues to work with the Professional Contractors Group (PCG) to address these issues. The PCG has recently set up a security clearance forum which brings together key stakeholders including recruitment agencies, end users and vetting organisations under an independent chair. The forum's main focus are to: review current performance in adhering to guidelines; promote useful discussions around common issues of concerns; and explore further avenues to drive compliance by suppliers via any legal or contractual levers.
9. We would be grateful for your views and suggestions on how we can improve compliance and any other comments that you might like to offer.

**Contact:**

10. If you have any questions and comments, please email [gssmailbox@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:gssmailbox@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk)
11. Further information on national security vetting can be found on the Cabinet Office Website, <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/security-policy-framework>. Information on the Professional Contractors Group is available on [www.pcg.org.uk](http://www.pcg.org.uk).

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