National Security Vetting is distinct from other types of vetting, (for example checks to determine suitability to work with children) and is regulated by the Government’s statement of vetting policy which is set out in full on the pass application and security questionnaire.
WHY HAVE A SECURITY VETTING SYSTEM AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

The aim of security vetting is to ensure that the character and personal circumstances of an individual are such that he or she can be trusted with sensitive Government information or assets. There are currently three categories of security clearance:

- Counter-Terrorist Check
- Security Check
- Developed Vetting

Checks are carried out only so far as necessary to safeguard national security in the light of the current assessment of the threats to security. All candidates for posts which are subject to security vetting – whether recruits, potential recruits, or existing employees – are asked to complete a security questionnaire which explains the purpose and sets out the Government’s statement of security vetting policy in full and invites them to provide the personal details required for the necessary checks to be carried out.
**WHY IS A SECURITY VETTING SYSTEM NECESSARY?**

Protective security is required in this country, as it is in others, to counter the threats to national security which may stem from the following:

- Foreign intelligence services;
- Terrorist groups;
- Those who wish to overthrow or undermine Parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means;

**Individuals who:**

- May be susceptible to pressure or improper influences;
- Have shown dishonesty or lack of integrity which throws doubt upon their reliability;
- Have demonstrated behaviour or are subject to circumstances which may otherwise indicate unreliability.

The security vetting system is a key element of protective security.
WHO IS AFFECTED?

The system applies to those in the following categories whose employment involves access to sensitive Government information or assets:

- Crown servants, including
- Civil servants;
- Members of the security and intelligence agencies;
- Members of the armed forces;
- The police;
- Employees of certain other non-government organisations which are obliged to comply with the Government’s security procedures;
- Employees of contractors providing goods and services to the Government.
WHAT IS THE BASELINE PERSONNEL SECURITY STANDARD (BPSS)?

BPSS is not a formal security clearance, but is designed to provide a level of assurance as to the trustworthiness and integrity of individuals whose work, in the main, involves access to CONFIDENTIAL assets or occasional SECRET assets. It includes:

- Verification of identity;
- The taking up of references
- A nationality check
- A criminal record declaration

BPSS is a pre-requisite to National Security Vetting and must be applied to every individual who applies for security vetting.
WHAT IS A COUNTER-TERRORIST CHECK?

You will need a Counter-Terrorist Check (CTC) clearance if your post:

- Involves proximity to public figures at particular risk from terrorist attack;
- Gives access to information or material assessed to be of value to terrorists;
- Involves unescorted access to certain military, civil, industrial or commercial establishments assessed to be at particular risk of attack by a terrorist organisation.

**It includes:**

- Verification of identity;
- A check against departmental/company records;
- The completion of a Security Questionnaire;
- A check against criminal and security records;
- Exceptionally, a detailed interview with you conducted by an investigating officer.

To be granted a pass with unescorted access to work at the Houses of Parliament and/or access to the Parliamentary network or have access to sensitive parliamentary data, a CTC clearance is required.
WHAT IS A SECURITY CHECK?

A Security Check clearance is is a higher level of clearance and is required if your post requires you to have substantial access to SECRET assets or occasional access to TOP SECRET assets.

There will be some posts that require this clearance. The Parliamentary Security Department will advise if this clearance is required for your post.

WHAT IS DEVELOPED VETTING?

Developed Vetting (DV) is the most comprehensive form of security vetting and is what is needed if your post requires you to have substantial access to TOP SECRET assets or if you will be working in the security and intelligence agencies.

There are very few posts at the Houses of Parliament that require DV clearance. The Parliamentary Security Department will advise if this clearance is required for your post.
DO I HAVE TO BE VETTED?

There is no obligation to go through the vetting process; however, to work on the estate and/or have access to the parliamentary IT network, CTC security clearance is required.

WHY DO I NEED SECURITY CLEARANCE?

National Security Vetting exists to provide a level of assurance as to the trustworthiness, integrity, reliability and resilience of an individual to handle sensitive information or assets. Your clearance allows you to work in posts which involve close proximity to public figures assessed to be of particular risk from terrorist attack; have access to information or material assessed to be of value to terrorists and be granted unescorted access to particular establishments, judged to be of particular risk from terrorist attack. Misuse of this information or access privileges, accidental or otherwise, may constitute a criminal offence and/or put others at risk. As well as following security procedures, you have a substantial responsibility to act at all times in a way that will not put you at risk of being unduly influenced, exploited or blackmailed and to uphold the reputation of the Houses of Parliament.
WHAT ABOUT THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS?

Human Rights legislation guarantees certain human rights and fundamental freedoms including the right to privacy and freedom of expression. These rights are subject to a number of exceptions; in particular they may be subjected to such interference as is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security. The Houses of Parliament has full regards to the ECHR in applying National Security Vetting.

WHAT ABOUT UNFAIR DISCRIMINATION?

All candidates for National Security Vetting are treated impartially and consistently, irrespective of their sex, marital status, age, grade, colour, ethnic origin, religious affiliation or sexual orientation.
IS THE LONG QUESTIONNAIRE NECESSARY?

The questionnaire can look daunting but you will find that the questions are straightforward. You should first read through the questions to find out what is required, collect together the necessary information and then allow plenty of time for completion. You must answer ALL questions. If you refuse to provide important information, it may not be possible to grant you a security clearance. If you do not understand a question please ask for guidance from the Pass Office. They can be contacted on 020 7219 5920 or email passoffice@parliament.uk

If you realise after you have handed in the questionnaire that you have inadvertently made a mistake or omitted something important, please tell the Pass Office or the person to whom you returned the questionnaire. If you do not do so, the error/omission could be held against you during the assessment process. Also make certain that you have signed the questionnaire in the appropriate places otherwise it will be returned to you causing unnecessary delay.
I USED TO BE POLITICALLY ACTIVE AND THINK THAT THE SECURITY SERVICE MAY HOLD A RECORD ON ME. WILL IT AFFECT MY CLEARANCE?

The Security Service is only likely to have a record on you as a political activist if you have been involved with an organisation which advocates, or has in the past advocated, the overthrow of Parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means. If you think there might be a problem, declare this on the questionnaire and you will be given every opportunity to explain the situation. Your suitability for security clearance will be decided on the overall picture and not on one isolated piece of information.

WILL A CRIMINAL RECORD RESULT IN SECURITY CLEARANCE BEING REFUSED?

Each case will be judged on its merits and a number of things taken into account (e.g. the seriousness of the offence(s); the length of time since it was committed; the age of the subject at the time; and any other special circumstances). The important thing is to be completely open and honest about any criminal history. Any attempt to conceal information could be taken as evidence of unreliability/dishonesty and may affect the granting of security clearance.
I’M TEMPTED TO KEEP QUIET ABOUT SOMETHING IN MY PAST AND HOPE NO-ONE FINDS OUT

Lying or concealing information on a vetting questionnaire or at interview is viewed very seriously because it is taken as evidence of unreliability and/or dishonesty. Indeed your clearance could be refused because you lied, even though what you were seeking to conceal would not in itself have caused a problem. Furthermore, your clearance could be removed at a later date if the lie subsequently comes to light. It is simply not worth it.

WHAT ABOUT SPENT CONVICTIONS OR SPEEDING OFFENCES?

You must disclose all convictions whether spent or unspent as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. This additional requirement is due to the fact that you are undergoing national security vetting and includes motoring offences (excluding parking) even where a spot fine has been administered by the Police.
DO YOU HAVE TO BE A BRITISH NATIONAL TO BE SECURITY CLEARED?

No, but to enable meaningful checks to be carried out you will need to have lived in the UK for a sufficient amount of time.

DO I HAVE TO HAVE LIVED IN THE UK FOR A SET PERIOD OF TIME?

To enable meaningful checks to be carried out you will need to have lived in the UK for a sufficient period of time. To undergo a CTC, you must have normally resided in the UK for a minimum of 3 years out of the last 5 years.
HOW LONG DOES CTC CLEARANCE TAKE?

The Pass Office have a target to complete all CTC clearances within 5 working days. Note that we start recording clearance time on receipt of a fully completed and accurate security questionnaire to the Pass Office. Once clearance has been received, your pass sponsor will be emailed to notify them that your pass is ready for collection or that you can now apply for a parliamentary email account. You should allow additional time for your sponsor to carry out further administration requirements.

WHY MIGHT MY CLEARANCE TAKE LONGER THAN AVERAGE?

Security clearance involves a series of checks, some of which are provided by external parties. Third party checks can be subject to delays that are outside the control of the Pass Office, and which may impact on the completion of your clearance.
WHAT CAN I DO TO SPEED UP THE CLEARANCE PROCESS?

Make sure that you complete your security questionnaire promptly. Complete all of the questions carefully and thoroughly. The Pass Office cannot begin your clearance until they have full and accurate information.

DO ALL JOBS REQUIRE THE SAME LEVEL OF VETTING?

To work on the parliamentary estate and/or to gain access to the parliamentary network, you must be security cleared to CTC level. For some positions, you may be asked to be security cleared at a higher level.
WHAT IF I’VE BEEN SECURITY CLEARED ELSEWHERE – CAN YOU USE THAT TO SAVE TIME?

Clearances do not transfer automatically. The Houses of Parliament security questionnaire must be completed. On the front of the form, it asks if you have completed a form like this previously. If you have been security cleared elsewhere, please provide these details. If this is within the last 3 years then the pass office will attempt to confirm these details. Once confirmed, and if still valid, this clearance may be used to issue a pass.

WILL THE INFORMATION OBTAINED DURING THE VETTING PROCESS REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL?

Vetting confidentiality will be maintained in all but the most exceptional cases where a risk has been identified and a decision taken to ‘manage the situation’ rather than refuse security clearance. In such cases, those tasked with managing the risk will need the appropriate information in order to do this effectively.
WHO DECIDES WHETHER A CLEARANCE WILL BE GRANTED?

The Houses of Parliament or vetting authority (in the case of DV clearances) will make the decision in the light of all the available information obtained during the vetting process.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I HAVE BEEN GIVEN A SECURITY CLEARANCE?

Your security clearance will be monitored and subject to regular review. It is important that you maintain the standards of security expected and notify any changes in your personal circumstance (e.g. marriage, change of partner etc.) to the Pass Office.
**CAN I APPEAL AGAINST AN ADVERSE VETTING DECISION?**

Internal appeal processes are available to current employees of the House, current pass holders and those sponsored by Members. If, after appealing internally, you remain dissatisfied with the decision you can appeal to the independent Security Vetting Appeals Panel whose details will be made available to you at the time of your internal appeal.

**HOW LONG IS MY SECURITY CLEARANCE VALID FOR?**

Your security clearance is valid for a period of three years, assuming you remain in a CTC role and nothing happens to affect your role at Parliament. If your role is terminated within that three year period, your clearance will remain valid for up to a further 12 months. Keeping your clearance is contingent upon maintaining good security and reporting any changes in your circumstances.
Further information please contact:
passoffice@parliament.uk
020 7219 5920 or call x2244.