



<u>TITLE</u>	VETTING POLICY
<u>CCMT Sponsor</u>	Deputy Chief Constable
<u>Department/Area</u>	Professional Standards Department
<u>Section/Sector</u>	Force Security

1.0 Rationale

- 1.1 This policy adopts the requirements of the ACPO National Vetting Policy for the Police Community and provides a structured and accountable process for the vetting of all staff and non-police personnel working in support of the organisation.
- 1.2 It sets out a framework to support legal obligations including:
- Official Secrets Acts – the need to protect information from unauthorised disclosure
 - Data Protection Act – the need to confirm the reliability of staff
 - Other legislation – the need to reduce the risk of theft, fraud or malfeasance

2.0 Intention

- 2.1 The primary objectives of the policy are to safeguard our criminal intelligence, operational and financial assets, and to preserve the health, safety and welfare of our staff and those with whom we work in partnership.
- 2.2 The policy forms part of a broader security strategy to complement measures to protect organisational assets and reduce the risk of loss or compromise. It is reinforced by a set of security standards and templates that explain requirements and provide guidance to support implementation.

3.0 General Principles

- 3.1 The structure and criteria relating to 'police vetting' is different to that required for 'national security clearance', however, the two elements must be integrated to satisfy overall vetting requirements. Therefore policy and procedures have been developed to combine the two while reducing duplication as much as possible.

- 3.2 In defining necessary and proportionate vetting requirements, a key relationship is established between an individual's role and the extent to which access is required to premises, computer systems and information. From this, an appropriate role related vetting level is identified and attendant processes employed to complete vetting clearance.
- 3.3 The vetting policy and procedures, although adapted to suit the needs and structure of Thames Valley Police, remain consistent with national requirements. This is an important consideration as police vetting and national security clearance can be transferable between police and government organisations. In addition, the increase in data sharing (across police force boundaries) and the move to develop common role definitions nationally, reinforce the need for police vetting and security clearance procedures to follow a unified standard.
- 3.4 The Force Security Manager is accountable for all aspects of police vetting and national security clearance, supported by the Vetting Officer who is responsible for managing the process.
- 3.5 Thames Valley Police is committed to the maintenance of high levels of honesty and integrity, and to the prevention and disruption of dishonest, unethical and unprofessional behaviour. This policy supports that commitment by creating an understanding of the principles of vetting in the Force.
- 3.6 Vetting processes relate to 'role' and no distinction is made between different staff categories or non-police personnel. However, different roles require different levels of vetting and the appropriate clearance process will be completed before new applicants (internal or external) are appointed to a role.
- 3.7 Vetting clearance is based upon circumstances at a particular time and, in any event, lasts for a defined period only. Therefore, to continue to provide assurance as to the integrity, reliability and trustworthiness of individuals who have access to force assets, 'aftercare' procedures are necessary and these will include renewal, annual assessment for some roles, and review of a change of circumstances.

4.0 Challenges and Representations

- 4.1 Challenges and representations concerning this policy should be directed to the:
Force Security Manager
Thames Valley Police HQ
Kidlington, Oxon
OX5 2NX.
- 4.2 Requests for further information, clarification or advice, should be addressed to:
Vetting Officer
Thames Valley Police HQ
Kidlington, Oxon
OX5 2NX

5.0 Guidance, Procedures & Tactics

5.1 Vetting Terms

The two types of vetting are Police Vetting and National Security Clearance.

Police Vetting definitions include:

- Recruitment Vetting (RV)
- Management Vetting (MV)
- Non-police personnel Vetting (NPPV) – equivalent to RV or MV

National Security Clearance definitions include:

- Counter Terrorist Check (CTC)
- Security Check (SC)
- Developed Vetting (DV)

5.2 Vetting Levels

To integrate police vetting and national security clearance requirements six levels have been established, one of which will be applied to every role. The vetting level required is determined by the degree of access to premises, computer systems and information – and the breadth and depth of vetting increases proportionately. Vetting levels are:

- Level 1 – RV (Basic check)
- Level 2 – RV (Advanced check)
- Level 3 – RV (Advanced check) and CTC
- Level 4 – MV and CTC
- Level 5 – MV and SC
- Level 6 – MV and DV

5.3 Designated Posts

Levels 4, 5 and 6 are defined as ‘designated posts’ and vetting clearance is the subject of annual review with the post holder and their supervisor. Designated posts are roles where the opportunity for compromise of sensitive assets is highest and where there could be risk of substantial damage to the organisation.

Serious damage includes, frustrating the prevention and detection of serious, organised or major crime, frustrating the apprehension or prosecution of such offences, causing significant financial loss to the force, facilitating the inappropriate or unlawful award of contracts, or otherwise adversely affecting the reputation or security of the force.

5.4 Role Assessment

The Vetting Officer will assess roles to specify the appropriate level of vetting. New roles or significant variations to existing roles will be notified to the Vetting Officer for review. A record of the role related vetting level will be recorded on the personnel computer system.

5.5 **Vetting Process**

Personnel Departments will advertise vacancies and supply application forms to internal or external candidates. Upon return, the Personnel Departments will assess eligibility against criteria and, if the application is to be taken forward, details of the person will be forwarded to the Central Vetting Unit at Headquarters.

The Central Vetting Unit will supply the candidate with appropriate vetting forms for return and necessary checks will be completed. The result indicating granting or refusal of clearance will be advised to the Personnel Department for notification to the candidate.

For some roles, further national security clearance checks will be required but these will not be processed until an offer of employment or appointment is being considered. At this stage the Central Vetting Unit will send a further Security Questionnaire to the candidate for return and clearance checks to be completed.

Applicants will not be issued with a staff number, nor afforded building or computer access until vetting clearance has been confirmed.

5.6 **Vetting Dimension**

The breadth of vetting checks will increase in proportion to the sensitivity of the role and may include applicant, family members, cohabitants and associates.

The depth of vetting checks will again increase in proportion to the sensitivity of the role and will include a review of police operational, criminal and security records. Further checks may be completed against the electoral register and using credit reference agencies.

The criminal history of an applicant or family member may not be compatible with employment in certain roles. In addition, personal circumstances including excessive debt, alcohol or drug dependency or psychological issues may be unacceptable.

5.7 **Identification and Residency**

Part of the vetting process involves the applicant producing documents to prove their identity and place of residence. In addition, to allow meaningful vetting checks to be completed, a minimum period of three years residency in the UK is required. Applicants for designated posts (Levels 4, 5 and 6) must demonstrate a minimum period of five years residency in the UK.

5.8 **Vetting Decisions**

Every case is reviewed individually and if any doubt exists about the granting of vetting clearance, the circumstances are referred to the Force Security Manager before refusal is confirmed. In some circumstances, the Vetting Officer may initiate a meeting although information relating to family members or others cannot be disclosed at this time or by way of explanation for refusal of clearance.

5.9 **Appeal and Review**

New applicants and non-police personnel have no formal right of appeal against a decision to refuse vetting clearance. However, an independent review process is available.

Existing employees may appeal a decision to refuse or limit vetting clearance and this process involves an independent review followed by referral to the Deputy Chief Constable if necessary.

5.10 **Aftercare**

Vetting clearance remains valid for a defined period and a series of measures may be adopted to renew or confirm the validity of vetting. The measures include:

- Ongoing supervision
- Notification and review of change of personal circumstances
- Annual assessment (Designated Posts – Levels 4, 5 and 6)
- Business interest review
- Medical review (alcohol or drug dependency, or psychological issues)
- Re-vetting to renew clearance upon expiry

5.11 **Consent**

Applicants for vetting clearance should understand and consent to the process taking place. Consent is signified by the applicant completing and signing the declaration on the vetting forms. Third party consent cannot be obtained directly and applicants are advised that it is their responsibility to inform every person whose details they include on the vetting form.

Vetting is a pre-requisite for employment and therefore those who refuse to support the process will not be considered. Internal applicants can also refuse to participate in the vetting process and if this is a requirement for the role they currently occupy, a risk assessment will be completed and, if necessary, control measures introduced to limit accessibility to sensitive assets. If this is not practicable, the matter may be referred to the Deputy Chief Constable to consider redeployment to less sensitive duties.

5.12 **Confidentiality**

The vetting process includes completion of questionnaires which may contain sensitive personal information about the applicant. Such information is treated as strictly confidential and retained securely within the Central Vetting Unit. Separate personal vetting files are maintained and details included on a secure 'vetting' computer system – in both cases accessible to only Central Vetting Unit staff.

5.13 **Subject Access**

Personal vetting files may be subject of Data Protection subject access requests. Where an application is made for subject access, applicants may be provided with a copy of any material they have personally provided under the relevant vetting procedure. Information relating to family members or other parties will not be disclosed without consent.

5.14 **Record Disposal**

A disposal procedure is in place to ensure that personal data is kept no longer than necessary.

6.0 **Communication**

6.1 This policy is not protectively marked and can be made available to the general public if requested.

6.2 The policy, together with relevant 'standards' will be included on the Force Intranet and Internet.

7.0 **Compliance and Certification**

7.1 A comprehensive and proportionate vetting strategy assists Chief Constables to fulfil their responsibilities to maintain efficient and effective forces, as required under the Police Act 1996. It also assists in compliance with Principle 7 of the Data Protection Act 1998, the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974, Section 8(1) of the Official Secrets Act 1989, Section 115 Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and Section 82 Police Reform Act 2002.

7.2 **Human Rights**

7.2.1 Consideration has also been given to the compatibility of the policy and related procedures with the Human Rights Act; with particular reference to the legal basis of its precepts; the legitimacy of its aims; the justification and proportionality of the actions intended by it; that it is the least intrusive and damaging option necessary to achieve the aims; and that it defines the need to document the relevant decision making processes and outcomes of actions.

7.2.2 It is acknowledged that this policy has the potential to engage Article 8, Right to respect for private and family life. However, the legitimacy for the engagement is provided within the text which states: there shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right such as in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety ... for the prevention of disorder or crime ... or for the protection of the rights or freedoms of others. (Human Rights audit completed 1 March 2005).

7.3 **Discrimination**

In the application of the policy, the Force will not discriminate against any persons regardless of sex, sexual orientation, race, colour, language, religion, political, or other opinion, national or social origin, association with national minority, property, birth, or other status as defined under Article 14, European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

7.4 **Data Protection**

All personal information supplied will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act. This prohibits any person, knowingly or recklessly, from disclosing personal data or information contained within personal data, without the consent of the Chief Constable (Data Controller).

8.0 **Monitoring and Review**

- 8.1 The Vetting Policy adopts the requirements of the Manual of Protective Security (Personnel Security), ACPO National Vetting Policy for the Police Community and supports elements of compliance within the ACPO Community Security Policy.
- 8.2 This policy will be reviewed annually and will take account of relevant legislation, national policies and procedures.