

Circular



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Status:	For Action
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Title:	Security Clearance for FRS Staff
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Issued by:
Steve Pomeroy Fire Services Branch

Addressed to:	Please forward to:
Chief Fire Officers HR Directors	Staff responsible for arranging security clearance for FRS staff

Summary
This circular sets out the arrangements for seeking Security Clearance (SC) for FRS staff in highly sensitive roles

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Security clearance (SC)

1. This circular sets out the procedure for applying for security clearance (SC) for FRS staff. It applies with immediate effect.
2. SC is a form of vetting which provides assurance that staff can reliably discharge roles that require access to highly sensitive information. Applications are processed and determined by United Kingdom Security Vetting (UKSV), an agency of the Cabinet Office. All such applications require a governmental “sponsor”, which, in the case of FRAs and other Welsh organisations dealing with devolved matters, is the Welsh Government. Applications cannot be made direct to UKSV and/or without the Welsh Government’s endorsement.

Who needs SC?

3. SC is a prerequisite for attendance on the standard course for national interagency liaison officers (NILOs), and is required in practice to discharge NILO duties.
4. More generally, SC is required for individuals whose work requires long-term, frequent and unsupervised access to assets that are classified SECRET (see below), and/or occasional supervised access to assets classified TOP SECRET. It is also required for individuals who:
 - a. while not requiring uncontrolled access to SECRET assets will be in a position to directly or indirectly bring about the same degree of damage
 - b. will have sufficient knowledge to obtain a comprehensive picture of a SECRET plan, policy or project
 - c. are being considered for employment where it would not be possible to make reasonable career progress without security clearance for access to SECRET assets
 - d. require access to certain levels of classified material originating from another country or international organisation.
5. SECRET assets are defined by the UK Government as, “Very sensitive information that requires enhanced protective controls, including the use of secure networks on secured dedicated physical infrastructure and appropriately defined and implemented boundary security controls, suitable to defend against highly capable and determined threat actors, whereby a compromise could threaten life (an individual or group), seriously damage the UK’s security and/or international relations, its financial security/stability or impede its ability to investigate serious and organised crime.”
6. TOP SECRET assets are “Exceptionally sensitive information assets that directly support or inform the national security of the UK or its allies AND require an extremely high assurance of protection from all threats with the use of secure networks on highly secured dedicated physical infrastructure, and robustly defined and implemented boundary security controls.”
7. SC is only necessary for individuals whose work meets these specific criteria. It should not be seen as just an additional form of assurance about a contractor or a candidate for a senior or high-profile post, for instance. We suspect the number of FRS staff (other than NILOs) needing SC will be low. In particular, the criteria in 4(a) to (d) above seem unlikely to apply.

Applying for SC

8. Please send applications for SC to fire@gov.wales, including the following information about the individual concerned:
 - a. full name;
 - b. date of birth;
 - c. whether the individual currently holds SC;
 - d. post in respect of which SC or an SC renewal is sought; and
 - e. a brief description of how the post meets the criteria for SC. This should either (a) confirm that it is a NILO post; or (b) include a brief description of the type of information to which access is required and confirmation that this information is classified SECRET or TOP SECRET and stored appropriately; or (c) set out how the post otherwise meets the above criteria.
9. You should obtain any necessary consent from each individual concerned for their personal data to be shared with us for these purposes, and confirm to us that you have done so.
10. We may return applications which, following discussion with the WG Security Unit, do not appear to meet the criteria for SC. Those that do appear to meet the criteria will be processed by the Welsh Government and UKSV.

Holding SC

11. SC lasts for seven years. Holders of SC must report any changes in their personal circumstances, so you must ask them to inform you of such changes, and pass any such information on to us. This includes, but is not limited to the following:
 - a. change of name;
 - b. change of nationality;
 - c. new partner. The definition of a partner, for these purposes, is a spouse, a civil partner or a cohabiting partner, someone with whom the individual is in an enduring sexual and/or romantic relationship, or someone with whom the individual sees a committed or enduring future;
 - d. divorce, or dissolution of a civil partnership;
 - e. any involvement with the police on criminal matters, including arrest, refusal of bail, or acceptance of a police caution, reprimand or warning;
 - f. conviction for any offence except minor road traffic offences dealt with by means of a fixed penalty notice; or
 - g. a significant change in financial circumstances (such as bankruptcy or receiving a large inheritance).
12. In addition, please inform us if:
 - a. the individual is found to have committed an act of misconduct or gross misconduct;
 - b. the individual leaves the employment of the FRA, along with the reason for this (eg retirement, resignation, redundancy or dismissal);
 - c. the individual is diagnosed with a long-term medical condition or a short-term condition which could affect their duties on a continuing basis. A medical condition is not incompatible with SC but a risk assessment will be made based on the condition and the role discharged; or
 - d. there is any other reason which might suggest that the individual should no longer hold SC.

13. You do not need to tell us about individuals who:
- a. get married to, or enter a civil partnership with, an existing partner (unless they change their name as a result);
 - b. move to a post which does not require SC.
14. If an SC renewal is required (which is only the case if the individual continues to require it in connection with their duties) then an application should be made 6 months before the current clearance expires.

Funding

15. Each SC application costs £116. That is borne as an unfunded pressure on our budgets, and meeting it relies on underspends elsewhere. If the number of applications is low, that pressure is manageable; but if it were not, we would have to consider recharging the cost to the employing FRA, or deducting it from the National Resilience revenue grant.

Steve Pomeroy
Fire Services Branch
Welsh Government