

Pre-employment screening – countering the threat from within

ORGANISATIONS face threats from many directions and trying to develop contingency and business continuity plans for every eventuality can seem daunting, where do you start? Externally audited accreditations such as ISO27001 can assist in formulating security and information policy and avoiding many of the pitfalls by putting policies and plans in place to reduce or mitigate the various risks. Many organisations fall into the trap of seeing risk management as being the responsibility of the relevant manager or security official but we all have a role to play in ensuring a safe and secure environment in which to work.



We often concentrate on the issues such as vandalism, theft and fraud, fire and flood – but increasingly organisations are becoming aware of the risks posed by their own staff. The Government has major concerns about terrorism and recent advice by MI5 (Personnel Security: Managing the Risk), the Government's own Baseline pre-employment screening standard, the BS7858 screening of Practice and the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) good practice guide on the screening of staff all serve to raise the profile of pre-employment screening.

In reality, all organisations have a duty of care and a legal responsibility for both staff and visitors to their buildings and sites. By taking positive steps to ensure that only bona fide individuals are employed the continuity of the organisations activities and the future employment and contracts for employees and associates are assured.

Why screen people?

By performing robust pre-employment checks organisations protect themselves by ensuring that they and their agencies employ only genuine individuals. With the availability of large numbers of illegal identification and qualification documents a robust checking process is needed. A robust screening process provides the following key benefits:

- Provides a safe working environment
- Demonstrates a duty of care to all stakeholders
- Ensures a high quality workforce
- Maintains the integrity of the business
- Enhances the organisation's brand and reputation
- Avoids costly fines and litigation
- Assures management about legal compliance issues
- Avoids adverse publicity

Illegal workers

There are large fines of up to £10,000 for companies that employ illegal workers, even if they are supplied by a third party. The Government is talking about all organisations having to check the validity of all job applicants and not just those from outside of the EEC because they are so concerned about identity theft and illegal workers posing as UK citizens.

Thieves and fraudsters

Employing only legitimate employees ensures the safety of the organisation's assets and also the safety of staff and visitors. One company that has used Agenda for screening for the last 5 years has reported a 40% reduction in petty theft and crime on their site.

Data theft and industrial espionage

With an increase in incidences of data theft and identity fraud organisations are increasingly concerned about the theft of intellectual property and industrial secrets. These individuals can cause a tremendous amount of anxiety and disruption and often use social engineering skills to steal information.

Qualifications and experience

If the post being filled requires a certain level of expertise or qualifications or both then it is important that those qualifications and work experiences are checked thoroughly. The NHS saw a senior staff member dismissed, fined and given a suspended sentence for lying about his qualifications and a large corporation lost 15% of its share price overnight due to the lack of a claimed qualification from its CEO.

Some pre-employment screening hints!

• Checking the application form

This is vital first step, application forms are better as they then provide the information that you need to enable you to screen out undesirables at the first stage. It should also be made clear in job Ads that the position will be subject to a security screening as this will also deter some individuals that do not have the best interests of your organisation at heart. Check their previous qualifications, career and salaries, if they are changing dramatically for example going for a lower salary, a more junior job or dramatically changing their career you should ask further questions.

• Identity

The identification document must be checked at source, including any name changes to be effective you must be able to identify the given or birth name. Access to passport records, the DVLA and births, marriages and deaths registrars is the best way to check this information. If this identity is not checked properly then every other check is a waste of time!

• References and employment history

The identity and address of the references should be checked otherwise the references may be the individual themselves or a friend. It is important to speak to the last employer even if the person has not supplied them as a reference. Also check the dates specified in the CV with the past employer and review previous employment experience for anomalies, e.g. a complete change of direction in job? We would advocate thoroughly checking the CV/application form for any gaps or issues and using telephone interviews to confirm or deny the information with the candidate and the references.



• Address checks

It is important to know where a person lives; a utility bill can help with this and can then be cross checked against the information on the application form. But databases should also be used to check the address and also the names of others living at the address. Doing an additional media and sanctions/terrorist link search may reveal some unsavoury facts relating to the person or a flat mate!

• Qualification and membership checks

Sometimes people exaggerate their qualification grades but what if they are not actually a practising Doctor but claim that they are? This could have serious consequences and so the awarding bodies and societies must be contacted to ascertain that the claimed status is correct. If the qualification is vital to the role it is vital that it is checked as genuine. Remember even driving licences can be forged which can have serious insurance issues should an accident ensue.

How can screening potential employees help you?

By having a team of trustworthy and fully screened individuals it provides a safer place to work and can also assist in complying with legal requirements for example to have Criminal Record Bureau checks for those roles that come into contact with children or vulnerable adults. But, be warned screenings must be performed to at least the BS7858 Code of Practice and by trained individuals.

Effective screening needs:

Tenacity, get a screening wrong and you can put you and your organisation at risk and unfortunately these days you cannot take anything on face value, the persons details must be checked thoroughly. The primary requirement is skilled people and people who have a police or military background who understand investigative techniques and who have themselves been comprehensively screened. Free advice on what you actually need is useful, we have already mentioned the numerous guidelines (which can be confusing) – well established providers of screening services will have systems to assist you in selecting the most appropriate check for your organisation and using the latest technology to ensure that it doesn't stall your recruitment efforts.

CONTACT
If you would like to find out more about the ISIS system or any of our other screening services please contact us at info@agenda-security.co.uk

THE INFORMATION SECURITY INVESTIGATION SYSTEM (ISIS)

Designed specifically for pre-employment screening this bespoke system has been developed to precisely manage our client's individual needs. The ISIS system manages the whole process and includes an array of powerful features:

- Data, time and operator stamped entries
- Fully audit trailed processes
- Tracks the progress of every screening
- Flags up key milestones and performance indicators
- Real-time updates on our free secure client candidate tracking system
- High-level security systems and secure servers
- Securely held back-up tapes in fire-proof safe off site
- Services managed from "Secured by Design" accredited facilities
- Compliant with ISO27001 Information Security Management Standard
- Exceeds BS7858 screening Code of Practice
- Automatically selects sample screenings for auditing and quality control
- Ensures compliance with Data Protection Act and destruction of materials

Besides improving our efficiency, our ISIS system also facilitates the delivery of a quality screening service in the quickest turn-round times (a screening is typically completed in 3 to 6 days) and with individual options from as little as £5 and packages from only £60 it is a small price to pay for peace of mind!

