

# UK BACKGROUND SCREENING TRENDS

2022 Annual Report

PERSONNEL  
CHECKS

# FOREWORD



In [last year's guide](#) to screening trends in the UK, we discussed how we were preparing for an 'industry renaissance.' Since the financial crash of 2008, businesses have been far more conscious of how they manage their finances.

Initially, this meant that 'extras' such as background checks were stripped from recruitment processes. However, as business leaders have awoken to the benefits of background checks, we are seeing the boom that we expected.

Ultimately, background checks can help prevent organisations from losing money in the long-term. The amount spent on background checks pales into significance when compared to the potential [losses from one bad hire](#). From the conversations we've had, some businesses have had to learn this the hard way.

Over the course of the pandemic, there has been a massive spike in employment fraud. Both job seekers and businesses have been victimised by scammers and this is reflected by the volume of enquiries we receive about certain checks.

Social media screening is also a growing area of interest for employers and background screeners.

In this year's guide we'll dive into all these topics and more"

Jack Mellor: Managing Director



<b>Foreword</b> .....	1
<b>Increased Volume of Criminal Record Checks</b> .....	3
Benefits of Criminal Record Checks .....	3
Have a policy .....	4
Being an inclusive employer .....	4
<b>Screening Remote Hires</b> .....	5
Why screen remote workers .....	5
Which checks are best for me .....	6
<b>Rise in Qualification Checks</b> .....	6
What is qualification fraud .....	6
Preventing qualification fraud .....	7
<b>Social Media Screening</b> .....	7
What can show up on social media checks .....	8
Conducting social media checks responsibly .....	8
<b>Processing Background Checks</b> .....	9



# CONTENTS

## INCREASING VOLUME OF CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS

In the UK, criminal record checks are carried out by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). These are often referred to as DBS Checks. Since the launch of the DBS in 2012, there has been an increase in the number of DBS Checks processed every year\*. In the past 5 years, the number of checks carried out in the UK has risen from 4.3 million to nearly 6 million.

The Basic DBS Check has seen the biggest yearly increase out of every type of DBS Check. A Basic DBS Check is the lowest level of criminal record check. They reveal any unspent convictions, cautions or reprimands on someone's record. Since 2017, the number of Basic DBS Checks process has increased over 500%.

These checks are becoming increasingly common as employers start to understand the benefits of carrying out criminal record checks.

*\*The 20/21 financial year saw a drop of 0.1% from the previous year. This can be attributed to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. The number of Basic and Standard DBS Checks carried out by businesses increased during this time.*

## THE BENEFITS OF CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS

Standard and Enhanced DBS Checks are a statutory requirement in a number of industries. However, there is a growing trend for businesses with no requirement to conduct DBS Checks to include them as part of their recruitment.

This increase is likely in response to increased safeguarding initiatives across the UK. Conducting DBS Checks are beneficial in a few different ways:

- **Deter bad hires:** If criminal record checks are advertised as part of your recruitment practice it can deter people applying who may have negative intent towards your business.
- **Increase safety:** Having comprehensive information on who you're hiring can help you make safer recruitment decisions. This helps protect your employees, clients and the public.
- **Improve staff retention and turnover:** Implementing a safer recruitment policy can help you recruit the right people into your business. Having the right group of people working for you can do wonders for your company culture and boost your retention rates.

## HAVE A POLICY

If you are carrying out criminal record checks, it's vital that you have appropriate policies in place.

You must have a written policy on how to securely handle DBS Certificate information, electronically or otherwise. This policy must be made available to individuals when you request them to complete a DBS application form.

If you are carrying out Standard or Enhanced DBS Checks, you must also have a policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders. All employers must treat DBS applicants who have a criminal record fairly and should not discriminate because of a conviction or other information revealed.

You can find the DBS's sample policy [here](#).

## BEING AN INCLUSIVE EMPLOYER

According to data from the Ministry of Justice, 27% of working-age adults have a criminal conviction. For UK males, this increases to 33%. But a 2016 survey, commissioned by the Department of Work and Pensions, revealed that 50% of UK employers wouldn't consider employing someone with a criminal conviction.

Ignoring such a large portion of the workforce is bad for business. The UK is in the middle of a huge labour shortage. In the past year, we have seen records broken for the number of job vacancies multiple times.

Taking this stance ignores the wide range of convictions that may appear on someone's record. You could be excluding the perfect candidate for arbitrary reasons.



## BACKGROUND SCREENING REMOTE HIRES

One thing that a lot of people are agreeing on is that remote and flexible working models are here to stay. [57% of UK employees](#) have stated they do not want to return to the way things were. One survey showed that [1 in 4 UK workers](#) would resign from their current role if they were made to return to the office.

This means remote recruitment is something you need to be confident doing.

### WHY SCREEN REMOTE WORKERS?

It takes around seven seconds for first impressions to be formed. Body language is a big part of this; the strength of your handshake, whether you make eye contact, even the way someone wears makeup can contribute to our impression of a candidate.

However, the standards we have set for traditional interviews don't always translate to remote recruitment. This is why we've seen an increase in employers screening remote workers.

Bringing fresh blood into your business is essential for growth but can be a risk at the same time. A bad recruit at the very least could be a bad culture fit. At worst, your organisation could fall victim to employment fraud, costing you both time and money.

During the pandemic, Personnel Checks, recruited several members of staff remotely. Two of these roles were Chief Marketing Officer and Chief Technology Officer. As they were senior positions within the business, we needed to be sure they were the right fit.

Completing background checks on these remote hires helped give us the peace of mind to recruit confidently.

### WHICH CHECKS ARE BEST FOR ME?

There are many different checks that you can use to screen remote hires. The three types of check that we carry out on all remote hires are:

- **Basic DBS Check** – A Basic DBS Check is your standard criminal record check. It searches an individual's criminal history, showing any unspent convictions or conditional cautions the applicant may have.

- Occupational History Checks - These checks reveal a complete history of an applicant's work history, including all periods of employment, self-employment, unemployment etc. These checks are essential for any senior hires and cover up to six or ten year's worth of occupational history.
- Media Checks - These checks provide selected results based on a search using an online search engine and media feeds against the candidate's full name. This will reveal any negative information that has been publicly reported on the individual. Particularly useful for positions in the public eye.

This list is not comprehensive and if you are considering background screening for your business there are many others that might be relevant. Anything from adverse financial checks, through to, international criminal record checks.

## STEEP RISE IN QUALIFICATION CHECKS

Employee fraud is a growing concern. One of the biggest areas of employee fraud in recent years has been in relation to qualifications. People lying on CVs or actually purchasing fake documents is becoming increasingly common.

An investigation by the BBC in 2018 revealed the extent of the 'staggering' network providing fake qualifications in the UK. It was reported that qualifications, including PhD's, were sold to NHS nurses and consultants and even a large defence contractor. Considering the effort that goes into these operations it can be incredibly difficult for employers to know whether what they're looking at is real.

Research has shown that a typical organisation loses around 5% of their annual revenue due to fraud. After the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, this is a loss that many businesses can't afford. Qualification checks can be a useful way to mitigate this risk.

## WHAT IS QUALIFICATION FRAUD

Qualification fraud is any form of theft, fraud or forgery of qualifications. In some cases, forgeries may also be prosecuted under trademark and copyright legislation. Qualification fraud falls under a wider umbrella of qualification malpractice.

This can range from candidates lying about the grades they achieved on their CV all the way to forged degrees and diploma mills.

There are conflicting opinions on why qualification fraud is increasing but the key point is that it is a growing problem. Fortunately, there are tools available to employers that can help.

## PREVENTING QUALIFICATION FRAUD

Qualification Checks are an incredibly useful recruitment tool for employers. There are two main types of checks that can be used to confirm a candidate's qualifications and education.

**Professional membership checks:** These checks validate a candidate's membership of professional or technical bodies, their dates of membership and any qualifications gained.

**Education Checks:** These provide you with confirmation of a candidate's education qualification. We confirm the period of attendance, the type of qualification gained, subjects studied, and grades achieved.

For degree-level qualifications, Prospects, part of Jisc, the UK's technology solutions organisation for education, have their own verification platform. Prospects HEDD, short for Higher Education Degree Datacheck, allows you to look up and authenticate a candidate's credentials on the UK's official hub.

Considering the diverse nature of higher and further education in the UK, this is a useful tool to have.

## SOCIAL MEDIA SCREENING

In our digital world, historic social media posts can quickly become front-page news. This point was illustrated in July 2021 when an article written by Google's Head of Diversity and Inclusion was picked up by news outlets across the US. Or when a number of individuals were sacked or suspended following allegations of online racist abuse following England's Euro 2020 final defeat.

How employees conduct themselves on social media is increasingly becoming a source of paranoia for employers. The potential damage to a business's reputation is severe. This is why social media screening is becoming a common consideration for those recruiting.

In research, published in 2015, it was found that 84% of employers looked up job applicants via a Google search or on social media. On top of this, around 20% of businesses had actively turned down a job applicant because of something they've found on their social media accounts.



## WHAT CAN SHOW UP ON A SOCIAL MEDIA CHECK?

A variety of information can be found when screening an individual's social media. The ones that businesses should take heed of when hiring are:

- Unlawful activity (drugs, underage drinking, etc.)
- Racist or sexist comments
- Violent or aggressive behaviour (including trolling or stalking)
- Sexually explicit material
- Confidential information
- Information which contests the information on their CV
- Derogatory posts written about a former employer

## CONDUCTING SOCIAL MEDIA CHECKS RESPONSIBLY

If your organisation uses social media checks as part of its recruitment strategy, there are certain things you need to make sure of:

- Information found on social media may not be up to date or accurate.
- Content on social media platforms doesn't always contain the necessary contextual information to make a sound recruitment decision.
- Discrimination laws apply to checks made online equally to other kinds of background check.

There are also several things you should bear in mind:

- Information found on social media may not be up to date or accurate.
- Content on social media platforms doesn't always contain the necessary contextual information to make a sound recruitment decision.
- Discrimination laws apply to checks made online equally to other kinds of background check.

One of the big problems with social media screening is that there is no standardised approach. If you intend to use social media as part of your candidate screening process, you need to be sure there is a specific objective for doing so.

## PROCESSING BACKGROUND CHECKS

Implementing a legally compliant background screening process is a complicated and time intensive task. Screening regulations tend to involve overlapping areas of legislation that can often be contradictory.

Relying on a professional background screening and compliance organisation is the best way to ensure you get the most out of this process.

Personnel Checks provide comprehensive screening services to a range of public and private sector institutions. We are members of several background screening trade bodies, and our managing director is the sitting vice-chair of the Criminal Record Trade Body (CRTB).

Personnel Checks are at the forefront of the industry and use this position to provide better solutions for our customers.

Why not join the ever-growing community of conscientious businesses that are taking the leap into background screening?

For more information about how Personnel Checks background screening solutions can aid your organisation, get in touch! You can give us a call on 01254 355688 or drop us an email at [letstalk@personnelchecks.co.uk](mailto:letstalk@personnelchecks.co.uk)