

Code of practice for

Security screening of personnel employed in a security environment

ICS 13.310

Committees responsible for this British Standard

The preparation of this British Standard was entrusted to Technical Committee GW/1, Electronic security systems, upon which the following bodies were represented:

Association of Burglary Insurance Surveyors
 Association of Chief Police Officers of England and Wales
 Association of Security Consultants
 British Retail Consortium
 British Security Industry Association
 British Telecommunications plc
 Consumer Policy Committee of BSI
 Department of the Environment (Security Facilities Executive (SSG))
 Department of the Environment (Building Research Establishment)
 Electrical Contractors' Association
 Electrical Installation Equipment Manufacturers' Association (BEAMA Ltd.)
 Electricity Association
 European Association of Security Equipment Manufacturers
 Ex-police in Industry and Commerce
 Fire Brigades' Union
 Home Office Crime Prevention Centre
 Inspectorate of the Security Industry
 International Professional Security Association
 Loss Prevention Council
 Metropolitan Police
 National Approval Council for Security Systems
 Post Office
 Security Industry Training Organization
 Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board
 Tobacco Manufacturers' Association

This British Standard, having been prepared under the direction of the Consumer Products and Services Sector Board, was published under the authority of the Standards Board and comes into effect on 15 June 1996

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The following BSI references relate to the work on this standard:
 Committee reference GW/1
 Draft for comment 95/521196 DC

ISBN 0 580 25765 7

Amendments issued since publication

Amd. No.	Date	Comments

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Foreword

This British Standard was prepared by Technical Committee GW/1, at the request of users and providers of security services, to provide guidelines for the satisfactory conduct of such services.

This British Standard is based on the following codes of practice:

— BS 7499-1:1991 Annex A — *Vetting for employment by a manned security service*;

— a proposed new NACOSS Code of Practice for Security Screening, based on annex A of BS 7499-1:1991, to replace NACOSS NACP1 (Issue 1) 1990 [1];

and comments received on both documents. It is intended that annex A of BS 7499-1:1991 will be withdrawn and that this code of practice will become the single code of practice for the security industry. It has the specific support and recommendation of the following organizations:

British Security Industry Association

Electrical Contractors' Association

Inspectorate of the Security Industry

National Approval Council for Security Systems

Security Systems and Alarm Inspection Board

When BS 7499-1:1991 is revised, annex A will be deleted and any requirements in annex A not covered in this code of practice will be inserted into the main text of BS 7499-1. An example of this is the current requirement in annex A of BS 7499-1:1991 for a physical fitness check of potential employees. There is no recommendation in this code of practice for a physical fitness check, and the check will become part of the revised BS 7499-1.

As a code of practice, this British Standard takes the form of guidance and recommendations. It should not be quoted as if it were a specification and particular care should be taken to ensure that claims of compliance are not misleading.

A British Standard does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users of British Standards are responsible for their correct application.

Compliance with a British Standard does not of itself confer immunity from legal obligations. Particular attention is drawn to existing legislation concerning health and safety at work, data protection, the rehabilitation of offenders, race relations and equal opportunity.

Summary of pages

This document comprises a front cover, an inside front cover, pages i and ii, pages 1 to 12, an inside back cover and a back cover.

This standard has been updated (see copyright date) and may have had amendments incorporated. This will be indicated in the amendment table on the inside front cover.

1 Scope

This British Standard gives recommendations for the security screening of personnel to be employed in an environment where the security of people, goods or property is a significant feature of the employing organization's operations.

2 Informative references

This British Standard refers to other publications that provide information or guidance. Editions of these publications current at the time of issue of this standard are listed on the inside back cover, but reference should be made to the latest editions.

3 Definitions

For the purposes of this British Standard, the following definitions apply.

3.1

organization

company, establishment, government or local authority department, or other body employing personnel in an environment where the security of people, goods or property is a significant consideration

3.2

relevant employment

employment which involves, or may involve, the acquisition of, or access to, information or equipment, the improper use of which could involve the organization, any client of the organization, or any third party, in a security risk

NOTE The definition applies to personnel irrespective of whether they are engaged full-time or part-time, or on a permanent or temporary basis.

3.3

screening period

period of not less than 10 years immediately prior to the date of the application for relevant employment or transfer to relevant employment, or back to the date of ceasing full-time secondary education, if this date is more recent

3.4

provisional employment

initial period of employment for a new employee during which security screening is continuing

NOTE Successful completion of security screening is one criterion upon which the decision to grant confirmed employment beyond the period of provisional employment is based.

3.5

ancillary staff

persons involved in ancillary activities such as administration, personnel, building maintenance and cleaning

4 Selection of personnel

4.1 General

The organization should not employ persons whose history indicates that they would be unlikely to resist the opportunities for illicit personal gain, or the possibilities of being compromised, or the opportunities for creating any other improper breach of security which such employment might offer.

Although no system of security screening can provide absolute security, the organization should use every endeavour to ensure that the integrity of its personnel is established and maintained. In some cases, the application of this code of practice may prevent employment or cause dismissal, because the verification procedures cannot be completed satisfactorily. It is emphasized that this should not necessarily be taken as an indication of unsuitability; it may simply not have been possible to obtain the required positive evidence.

The organization should make clear to all personnel who are engaged in the security screening process, and to those with authority to offer provisional or confirmed employment, that high standards should be maintained in view of the special circumstances of the industry in which they are employed.

The organization should carry out security screening in accordance with this code of practice prior to the engagement of persons for relevant employment or to their being transferred to relevant employment from other duties for which they have not previously been subjected to security screening in accordance with this code of practice.

The organization should ensure that security screening in accordance with this code of practice has been carried out on all persons already in relevant employment.

This code of practice should be applied equally to full-time and part-time, and to temporary and permanent employees, and to all levels of seniority, including directors. The full security screening procedure should be carried out in the case of each employee or director regardless of their previous employment, even if that employment was with another organization engaged in the security industry.

Attention is drawn to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 [2] and to the information in annex A.

4.2 Security screening

4.2.1 General

The organization should obtain documentary evidence of background, experience and character for all potential personnel.

4.2.2 *Continuous record of career or history*

The organization should establish by direct reference to former employers, government departments, educational authorities, etc., with confirmation from them in writing, a continuous record of the career or history of the person being screened for the whole of the screening period on a month-to-month, rather than on a year-to-year, basis.

4.2.3 *Character references*

The organization should also obtain at least two written character references from relevant persons with personal knowledge of the person being screened, each of which confirms that nothing is known about the person being screened which would reflect adversely upon their suitability for the proposed employment.

The referee should confirm the period and nature of their relationship with the person subject to the security screening.

NOTE 1 The character references may be included in the references supplied by the parties referred to in 4.2.2.

NOTE 2 Attention is drawn to the fact that, wherever practicable, one of the character references should be from the most recent past employer of the person being screened (but see also the note at the end of 4.2.5 regarding contacting a person's current employer).

NOTE 3 Effective security screening is dependent upon those having knowledge of the person being screened supplying information and references. It is hoped that persons and firms generally will co-operate in supplying information and references in respect of their past employees when requested to do so, unless there are good and substantial reasons for not supplying such information and references.

4.2.4 *Personal file*

A personal file should be established for each person subject to security screening (see clause 8).

4.2.5 *Provision of information*

All applicants for relevant employment and all existing employees transferred to relevant employment from other duties should be required to provide the following.

- a) Details of their education and career history throughout the screening period on a month-to-month basis.
- b) The names of at least two persons, who may or may not be former employers, from whom a character reference may be obtained.
- c) Details of all cautions or convictions for criminal offences, including motoring offences and pending actions.
- d) Details of all bankruptcy proceedings and outstanding court judgements for debt.

e) An acknowledgement that misrepresentation, or failure to disclose material facts, may constitute grounds for immediate dismissal and/or legal action.

f) Assistance in obtaining a continuous record of written evidence confirming that there is nothing in their background which would reflect adversely upon their suitability for the proposed employment.

g) A signed statement authorizing an approach to former employers, government departments, personal referees, etc. for verification of their career and employment record.

NOTE If necessary, applicants may be reassured that a current employer will not be contacted until written permission is obtained. It may be that such permission is withheld until an offer of provisional employment is made and, in such cases, the applicant should be informed that it is a condition of the offer of provisional employment that the offer will be withdrawn if the security screening is not concluded satisfactorily.

4.2.6 *Verification of information*

Verification of the following should be sought and confirmation obtained in writing.

- a) Current place of residence.
- b) Date and place of birth; the birth certificate (not a photocopy) of the person being screened should be seen to verify name, date of birth, etc. For persons who changed their surname (e.g. by marriage or deed-poll), the relevant certificate (not a photocopy) should also be seen. Alternatively, military service documents or a valid full passport can be used to confirm identity.
- c) Date of leaving full-time, secondary education; in the case of applicants who state that they ceased full-time secondary education less than 10 years prior to the application for employment, the written record should confirm the date of leaving. For those who left an educational establishment at the end of a school year (summer term), the period up to 1 November of that year may be considered as part of the school career; for those leaving at other times of year, the period of grace should be limited to two months. If verification is not possible with the educational establishment, the date of leaving should be confirmed by the referees.
- d) Periods of employment; obtained from previous employers, although reference to a current employer should not be made without the applicant's prior written permission.

e) Periods of registered unemployment; obtained from the Department of Employment, Department of Social Security or other government agencies. Where a government department states that records are not available, the period for which the record is not available should be treated as a gap.

f) Periods of self-employment; obtained from the Inland Revenue, Customs and Excise (VAT), bankers, accountant, solicitor, trade or client references, etc., as appropriate. Evidence should also be obtained confirming that the applicant's business was properly conducted and was terminated satisfactorily.

g) Periods of residence abroad; obtained where possible by, e.g. approaches to employers, confirmation of dates obtained from passports and work permits by contact with appropriate embassies and consuls.

NOTE It is possible that inability to trace an employer or a DSS record may be because false information is given to cover a period serving a spent prison sentence (see annex A), which the person being screened is legally entitled not to disclose. However, legislation does not entitle anyone with a spent conviction to make a false claim of employment, etc., and rejection or dismissal could be justifiable on the grounds of misrepresentation, i.e. rejection or dismissal in these circumstances would be because false information was given, not because of failure to disclose a spent conviction.

4.2.7 Conditions for commencement of provisional employment

Employment should not commence until satisfactory screening of a minimum period of five years immediately prior to the date of application for employment (or back to the date of ceasing full-time secondary education if that is more recent) has been carried out.

Such employment is deemed to be provisional employment, and is subject to a time limitation in accordance with 4.2.8.

Where an offer of provisional employment is made, oral confirmation (e.g. by telephone) of employment or career and character references may be taken initially. Details of the procedures which should be followed in these cases are given in 4.4. Under no circumstances should provisional employment commence until these procedures have been concluded and the results judged to be satisfactory.

Screening for the minimum period should not be regarded as complete until written confirmation has been received.

The employee should be classed as employed, subject to satisfactory completion of screening during the period of provisional employment.

4.2.8 Period allowed for completion of security screening

Security screening covering the whole of the security-screening period (see 2.3) should be completed not later than 16 weeks after employment (i.e. provisional employment) has commenced.

Provisional employment should in no case continue for a period exceeding 16 weeks.

4.2.9 Monitoring of persons in provisional employment

Persons engaged in screening duties should operate a systematic administrative system which guarantees that the screening procedures are continually monitored for each provisional employee throughout the 16-week screening period. Documentation relating to an individual being screened should clearly show the dates on which provisional employment commenced and is to cease.

4.2.10 Ongoing monitoring

Employers should monitor all personnel in relevant employment, so as to be aware at the earliest possible time of any changes which may indicate that an employee's suitability may have become reduced to an unacceptable level.

4.3 Gaps in career record

Where there are gaps in the career record which cannot be independently confirmed in accordance with the written verification procedure, the following procedure should be followed.

Written statements from referees may be used, provided that they had personal knowledge of the person being screened during the period they are covering. The organization should be satisfied as to the credibility of the personal referee. The written statement should as a minimum confirm that the applicant was where he or she purported to be, but it may also include a character reference.

Applicants may be asked to obtain information under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984 [3]. Information from this source can only be supplied by the person being screened and care should be taken to ensure that the information supplied is authentic.

In exceptional cases, a Statutory Declaration made before a solicitor, commissioner for oaths, notary public or justice of the peace by the person being screened may be used as an alternative, but only with the prior approval of:

- a) a partner in the organization, or;
- b) the sole owner of the organization, or;
- c) a director of the organization, or;

- d) a senior executive of the organization duly authorized in writing by one of the above as having specific authority to accept a Statutory Declaration.

The use of model form 5 in annex B is recommended (see also 9.2).

A Statutory Declaration should not be used in respect of the five most recent years of the security screening period.

A progress sheet (or other equally effective means) should be used to monitor and record the action taken.

4.4 Oral references

Screening enquiries may be made orally, but it is emphasized that these oral procedures do not provide a substitute for written evidence. It is essential that written evidence should be obtained before commencement of confirmed employment. The screening process should not be regarded as completed until this has been received. Screening enquiries made orally should be subject to the following.

- a) All of the recommendations set out in 4.2 should be followed.
- b) Character referees may be telephoned. The character referees may also confirm a period of history.
- c) Where the telephone is used, the telephone number of the person called should be ascertained independently and a telephone number supplied by the person being screened should not be relied upon. Where other means are used, equivalent care should be taken to verify the identity of the person contacted.
- d) Information given orally by the referee should be noted at the time of the enquiry, and should be signed and dated by the member of staff making the enquiry and retained on the individual's screening file.
- e) A written request for written confirmation of the information given orally should be forwarded to the referee within five working days of the enquiry being made.
- f) The progress sheet (or other equally effective means) should be used to monitor and record action taken.

The use of model forms 1, 2, 3 and 4 in annex B is recommended (see also 9.2).

4.5 Interviews

All potential personnel should have a personal interview prior to any offer of employment being made.

5 Ancillary staff

The recommendations of this code of practice should be applied to all ancillary staff engaged in relevant employment. However, where there are ancillary staff who have been determined as not being in relevant employment, and who therefore have not been security screened in accordance with the provisions of this code of practice, it is important in all such cases that clear and unambiguous routines be established for dealing securely with any confidential information to which such ancillary staff might (in the absence of such routines) have access in the course of day-to-day operations. The routines should be regularly monitored and updated and should deal with such matters as clearing desks and locking filing cabinets, etc., at the end of the working day, securely shredding and disposing of waste paper (including spoiled documents, etc.), the control of access to computers and data storage media, telephone conversations, photocopiers, tape recorders, video disks, etc.

NOTE It is accepted that secretarial staff may be employed on a strictly short-term basis, provided their access to information of a confidential nature is limited and such access is restricted to situations where it is necessary, and they are supervised by permanent, fully security-screened members of staff.

6 Acquisitions

Where one organization acquires the business of another organization and the operations of the combined organization are such as to require security screening for part or all of the new organization, then the situation of all relevant personnel in the new organization should be reviewed.

If it cannot be established from records that security screening which at least meets the requirements of this code of practice has already taken place for any member of staff in a post for which security screening should apply, then security screening should be undertaken within a period of 16 weeks from the date of the acquisition of the business. This includes personnel who were in positions for which they should have been security screened in their original organizations, but where the security screening is considered unsatisfactory, and to personnel who, as a result of the acquisition, gain organizational or management responsibility requiring such security screening.

NOTE 1 The retrospective security screening of existing personnel should always be carried out with a degree of sensitivity appropriate to the length of service of the employee concerned.

NOTE 2 Where retrospective screening discloses transferred employees who are unable to meet the screening recommendations of this code of practice, employers are advised to ensure that any actions proposed are in accordance with legislation.

7 Subcontractors

The recommendations given in this code of practice should be applied to all subcontract personnel who, through subcontract arrangements, are engaged in relevant employment (see 3.2).

Before engaging subcontract personnel from a subcontractor, the organization should either:

- a) ensure that the subcontractor has security screened such personnel in accordance with the recommendations given in this code of practice, or;
- b) directly security screen all of the contractor's personnel likely to be involved in the subcontracted work, including relevant management staff.

8 Personnel employed in security screening

The person(s) responsible for the security screening of personnel should themselves be subject to security screening, in accordance with the recommendations of this code of practice. Where appropriate, personnel regularly employed in interviewing, screening and testing for the duties envisaged should be trained. The training of such personnel should include an explanation of security requirements and their ongoing nature.

NOTE Personnel involved in such activities should consider attending appropriate external courses organized for this purpose.

In large organizations, where the tasks of interviewing, screening and testing, and deciding whether to employ and whether to terminate employment are carried out within a separate department, the departmental personnel should be adequately supervised at all times, and attention given to the division of functions and authority within the department for internal control purposes. For example, where an employee has been engaged on a provisional basis, any subsequent offer of confirmed employment should be authorized only by someone other than the person who authorized the provisional employment, and the person authorizing confirmed employment should see and review the personal file in each case.

9 Records

9.1 General

Organizations should maintain the following records concerning screening procedures:

- a) a separate file for each person subjected to security screening. The files of all persons currently employed on a provisional basis should be identified separately from other employee files;

- b) a record of the exercise of discretion for gaps in career record and copies of the relevant Statutory Declarations (see 4.3);

- c) progress sheets (or equivalent) for each applicant.

Individual records should clearly indicate, where applicable, that an employee is engaged on a provisional basis, showing prominently the dates on which provisional employment commenced and is to cease; the latter should be not later than 16 weeks after the date of commencement.

The basic details of the employee, which include dates employed, positions held, disciplinary offences and a comment on suitability for employment in the security industry, should be retained for not less than 10 years after cessation of employment.

NOTE If personal records are maintained on a computer, there is a legal requirement to comply with the Data Protection Act 1984 [3].

9.2 Model forms

The use of the following pro forma is recommended. Forms 1, 2, 3 and 4 refer to the taking of references orally; form 5 is a pro forma Statutory Declaration. These forms may be modified in any convenient style, but should still record all this minimum information.

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Form 1. | Oral enquiry — Previous employer |
| Form 2. | Oral enquiry — Character reference, etc. |
| Form 3. | Request for confirmation of information given orally |
| Form 4. | Progress sheet — Initial oral security screening including authority to offer provisional employment |
| Form 5. | Statutory Declaration |

Examples of forms are shown in annex B.

Annex A (informative) Information regarding Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

A.1 The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 [2] permits, with some exceptions, an individual who has had a conviction for an offence to be rehabilitated and for the conviction to be treated as if it had never occurred. The Act does not extend to imprisonment for terms exceeding 30 months, but in other cases a person is regarded as rehabilitated where he/she has not, after a period of time, committed another serious offence. The period of time varies according to the sentence imposed and is referred to in the Act as the "Rehabilitation Period". The various Rehabilitation Periods are set out in **A.4**.

A.2 Under the Act an employer may not ask a prospective employee if he/she has spent convictions. The employer may ask if the individual has convictions, but the prospective employee is under no obligation to reveal spent convictions.

A.3 The Act also makes it unlawful for an employer to discriminate in any way against an employee or to dismiss him/her because of a spent conviction and if so the dismissed employee may claim unfair dismissal.

A.4 Rehabilitation periods vary according to the type and length of conviction originally incurred and are reckoned from the date of the conviction for which the sentence was imposed. The details are:

Sentence	Rehabilitation period ^a
Imprisonment or corrective training for more than six months but less than thirty months	10 years
Cashiering, discharge with ignominy or dismissal with disgrace from HM's Service	10 years
Imprisonment for six months or less	7 years
Dismissal from HM's Service	7 years
Detention in respect of a conviction in Service disciplinary proceedings	5 years
Fine or other sentence (not exceeding 30 months imprisonment) for which the Act does not provide a different rehabilitation period	5 years

^a Reduced by half for a person under 17 at the time the sentence was passed.

A.5 The Rehabilitation Periods for certain sentences, confirmed to young offenders, are as follows:

Sentence	Rehabilitation period
Borstal training	7 years
Detention for more than six but less than thirty months passed under s53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 [4] or s57 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1937 [5]	5 years
Detention for six months or less under either of those provisions	3 years
Order for detention in detention centre made under s4 of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 [6] or under s7 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1963 [7]	3 years

A.6 Reference should be made to the Act for fuller information. The above notes are not to be relied upon as a definitive statement or summary of the law.

Annex B (informative)

Model forms

FORM No. 1

ORAL ENQUIRY — PREVIOUS EMPLOYER

1. Employee (applicant)

Surname:

Forename(s)

2. Previous employer

Name of company:

Location:

Telephone number:

Name of contact person:

Dates employed:

– as stated by employees:

* – as confirmed:

– as stated by employees:

* – as confirmed:

*Would re-employ?

*Reason for not re-employing

.....

* Any reason to suppose an insurance company would not bond?

.....

Signed: Date:

(Person making enquiry)

Signed: Date:

(Security Screening Manager)

* Where response indicates that applicant is NOT suitable for proposed employment, bring to immediate attention of Manager responsible for security screening.

FORM No. 2

ORAL ENQUIRY — OTHER THAN PREVIOUS EMPLOYER

1. Applicant

Name:

2. Referee

Name:

Location:

Telephone number:

Reference required and period: (e.g character/self-employment)

.....

Information supplied by applicant:

.....

As stated by referee:

.....

* Opinion as to suitability for proposed employment:

.....

.....

* Reason(s) for not recommending employment?

.....

* Any reason to suppose an insurance company would not bond?

.....

Signed: Date:

(Person making enquiry)

Signed: Date:

(Security Screening Manager)

* Where response indicates that applicant is NOT suitable for proposed employment, bring to immediate attention of Manager responsible for security screening.

FORM No. 3**REQUEST FOR CONFIRMATION OF INFORMATION GIVEN ORALLY**

Name:

Address:

.....

We refer to our conversation with you on about

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms

in connection with the application made to us by the above-named for employment as:

.....

Details of the information which you supplied to us orally are enclosed and we would be obliged if you would kindly confirm these details fairly reflect the information you supplied.

As you may know, this Company is engaged in the Security Industry. It is vitally important that we employ only persons of integrity who are likely to be able to resist the opportunities for improper personal gain which such employment might offer and who are responsible and conscientious.

The appropriate Code of Practice operated within this Industry requires us to obtain written confirmation of all references we receive in connection with applicants for employment.

A copy of a Form of Authority signed by the applicant is enclosed and also a stamped addressed envelope for the favour of your reply.

Yours faithfully

FORM No. 4

**PROGRESS SHEET - INITIAL ORAL SECURITY SCREENING
Including authority to offer provisional employment**

Name of Applicant:

PERIOD COVERED BY INITIAL ORAL SECURITY SCREENING

From: To:

(A) PERSONS APPROACHED:		Verification letter sent	Written reply received
Date	Name	Date Initials	Date Initials
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

(B) FILE REVIEWED	
Date of review	Reviewed by
Action	Initials

(C) AUTHORITY TO OFFER PROVISIONAL EMPLOYMENT
Authorized by: (Signature)

Date:

(D) DECISION NOT TO OFFER EMPLOYMENT
Employment refused: (Signature)

Date:

ON COMPLETION, THIS SHEET SHOULD BE ATTACHED TO APPLICANT'S PROGRESS SHEET COVERING REMAINDER OF THE SECURITY SCREENING PERIOD.

FORM No. 5

STATUTORY DECLARATION

I

of

in the city/town of do solemnly declare that

I was *self-employed/employed/unemployed for the period(s)

.....
.....

I make this declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of the provisions of the Statutory Declarations Act 1835.

Signed:

Declared at:

On the: day of 19

Before me

(*Solicitor/Commissioner of Oaths/Notary Public/Justice of the Peace)

* delete as appropriate

List of references (see clause 2)

Informative references

BSI publications

BRITISH STANDARDS INSTITUTION, London

BS 7499, *Manned security services*.

BS 7499-1:1991, *Code of practice for static guarding and mobile patrol services*.

Other references

[1] NACOSS. *Code of Practice for Security Screening NACP1* (Issue 1) 1990. Maidenhead: NACOSS.

[2] GREAT BRITAIN. *Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974*. London: HMSO.

[3] GREAT BRITAIN. *Data Protection Act 1984*. London: HMSO.

[4] GREAT BRITAIN. *Children and Young Persons Act 1933*. London: HMSO.

[5] GREAT BRITAIN. *Children and Young Persons Act 1937*. London: HMSO.

[6] GREAT BRITAIN. *Criminal Justice Act 1961*. London: HMSO.

[7] GREAT BRITAIN. *Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1963*. London: HMSO.

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