

Disclosure and Barring Service for Volunteers

Screening is one way of reducing the risk of recruiting volunteers who may be unsuitable to work with children or other vulnerable people. Screening is a valuable tool in identifying unsuitable volunteers, but it is not fool proof. It is vital to always carry out effective recruitment, training and supervision of volunteers as well as staff. In addition, there should be a system that volunteers are aware of for anyone to raise concerns about an individual.

Disclosure and Barring Service

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) can make criminal records checks for organisations engaging people aged 16 or over who are working with children and vulnerable adults. The level of checks varies depending on what the role requires and whether the individual is undertaking 'regulated activities'. These checks are to assist organisations in making safer recruitment decisions; they are just part of effective volunteer recruitment and safeguarding arrangements.

The DBS can't access criminal records overseas, so if a volunteer has lived outside the UK you may need to make additional checks. Further information is available on the Government's Home Office website.

What are regulated activities?

A regulated activity focuses on close unsupervised contact with vulnerable groups including children. For children a regulated activity is one that happens once a week or more, or four or more days in a month (or overnight).

There is no time requirement for regulated activities with adults.

Regulated Activities - For those working with Children and Young People:

- Unsupervised Activities: teaching, training, instruction, care or supervision of children; the provision of advice and guidance or driving a vehicle only for children.
- Working in specified places such as schools, children's homes, and childcare organisations (this does not include supervised volunteers).

These activities are only regulated if they occur once a week or more or four or more times in a month (or overnight).

Other regulated activities include:

- Personal Care: washing, dressing or healthcare by, or supervised by, a professional (even if it is only done once).
- Registered child minding and foster-carers.

Regulated activities still exclude family, personal and non-commercial arrangements.



Regulated Activities - For those working with Adults:

- Healthcare: healthcare professionals, or someone working directly under them e.g. doctors, nurses, healthcare assistants and physiotherapists.
- Personal Care: someone who assists with washing, dressing, eating, drinking and toileting or teaching someone to do this.
- Social Work: social workers and care workers in connection with health services or social services.
- Those who provide assistance with cash, finances, bills and shopping due to an individual's age, health or disability.
- Those who provide assistance with personal affairs such as powers of attorney, or duties under the Mental Health Act.
- Those who provide transport services to and from healthcare, personal care or social care services (except friends, family and taxi drivers).

Activities that do not count as regulated activities include:

- activities that are supervised to a reasonable level
- health care not provided or supervised by a health care professional
- legal advice
- treatments/therapy
- occasional/temporary services (that are not listed as regulated)
 - volunteers supervised to a reasonable level
 - Governors
 - Inspectorates.



Types of Checks

There are three types of checks that can be carried out. Standard, Enhanced and Enhanced and Barred List check. The level of check required will depend on the activities carried out.

Standard Checks

The standard check is for individuals working with vulnerable people, including children, whether or not they are engaged in a regulated activity. To be eligible for this check the position must be specified in the *Exceptions Order to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974*. Standard checks reveal information relating to spent and unspent criminal convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings on the Police National Computer (PNC).

Enhanced Checks

The enhanced check is for individuals working with vulnerable people, including children, who are engaged in a regulated activity. To be eligible for this check a position must be specified in the *Exceptions Order to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974* and regulations made under the *Police Act 1997*.

Enhanced & Barred List Checks

The Enhanced & Barred List checks determine whether someone is permitted to work with vulnerable people, including children. To be eligible for this an individual must be engaging in a regulated activity.

How can a Voluntary Organisation use this Service?

There are two ways organisations can use this service:

- become a Registered Body
- apply for access through use of an Umbrella Body.

1. Becoming a 'Registered Body'

If your organisation is likely to require more than 100 checks per year then it can apply to become a registered body.

There will be a charge to become a registered body, and an organisation will need to submit at least 100 forms a year as well as nominating a signatory to have overall responsibility.

If your group belongs to a national organisation then you should be able to access the DBS system they use. Check with your head office to see if the organisation is a registered body.

Local Timebanks can make DBS checks through Voluntary and Community Action's membership of Timebanking UK.

2. Apply for Access to the Disclosure Service through an Umbrella Body

If your organisation is relatively small or does not require many checks each year, it is best to use an umbrella body. DBS checks for volunteers are free but there is usually an administration charge. Charges vary, so we recommend comparing prices.

Registered umbrella bodies can also provide advice on different aspects of the disclosure system.

A voluntary organisation requiring the check will need to:

- appoint a named person as a point of contact with the Umbrella Body
- check the identity of the prospective volunteer against appropriate original ID (not photocopies)
- check that the Disclosure Application form has been completed correctly by the prospective volunteer in **BLACK INK** only



There is a database of umbrella bodies on the government website which organisations can search to find an Umbrella Body in their region. Visit <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/dbs/> or email customerservices@dbs.gsi.gov.uk or telephone the Disclosure Service Information Line on 0870 9090 811.

Locally, Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) is registered as a DBS Umbrella Body but is currently unable to process disclosure applications on behalf of voluntary organisations and community groups. Their service has therefore been suspended.

Appointing a Volunteer who has been the subject of a Disclosure Application

The DBS will send the Disclosure Certificate to the person who was the subject of the Disclosure Application; they will not send a copy to the Umbrella Body of the organisation making the application.

You can trace the application online using the Disclosure Application Form reference number (F00...etc.) and the applicant's date of birth etc.

Organisations will therefore need to ask the volunteer to see the original Disclosure Certificate, once they have received it from the DBS, and to make a copy of it.

The organisation can then make a decision whether the person is suitable for an appointment, based on the information provided by the Disclosure Certificate and other checks/references. If any of these raise concern then it may be appropriate to discuss these with the prospective volunteer before appointing the volunteer in that role.

Further Information

The DBS leaflet *Disclosure application process for volunteers* can be downloaded via this link:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/442312/DBS_Volunteers_Leaflets_A5_4pp.pdf

Safeguarding is everyone's business and safeguarding information is an important tool for volunteer-involving organisations to use.

For further information on how organisations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, see *Working Together to Safeguard Children* available from the Department for Education via this link: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/592101/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children_20170213.pdf

For further information on how commissioners and providers of health and social care services should work together to produce and implement local policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse see *No secrets* available from the Department for Health via this link: <http://digbig.com/5bmwss>

Voluntary and Community Action and Community Voluntary Service Bedfordshire currently provide free Safeguarding Awareness sessions for volunteers (and staff) working in small voluntary organisations and community groups delivering services in Central Bedfordshire.

Email training@action-centralbeds.org.uk or telephone 01252 850559 for further information or to book a place.

