

4. Volunteers

4.10 Criminal records checks



Since 2002, the criminal record checking system has been made more accessible to organisations, enabling them to make safer recruitment decisions when offering positions to volunteers and paid staff working with vulnerable groups.

Checks are processed through the **Criminal Records Bureau** and can only be requested for volunteers and staff who have been offered a position that is exempt under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) 1974, such as working with children or vulnerable adults.

The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)

The CRB is a Government Agency and provides a one-stop shop for those seeking access to criminal record checks. It has access to information held on the Police National Computer and relevant lists held by the Departments of Health (DoH), and Education and Skills (DfES). Additionally, in some circumstances, information is provided by local police forces. A Disclosure is the criminal convictions certificate containing such criminal record information.

The CRB Disclosure service can be accessed by becoming a CRB Registered Body (RB) or through the services of an Umbrella Registered

Body (URB), which acts on behalf of other organisations. Checking the background of volunteers and paid staff who are offered a position working with children and/or vulnerable adults can be used as part of an informed recruitment process.

Criminal Records Checks

Two kinds of criminal records checks (higher levels) are currently available:

Standard Disclosure –for posts that involve working with children or regular contact with vulnerable adults. It provides details of spent and unspent (current) as well as cautions, reprimands and warnings recorded by the police centrally. If the post involves working with children or vulnerable adults, the following may also be searched:

- Protection of Children Act (POCA) List
- Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) List
- Information that is held under Section 142 of the Education Act 2002 (formerly known as List 99)

Enhanced Disclosure –for posts that involve regularly caring for, supervising, training or being in sole charge of children and vulnerable adults.

An Enhanced Disclosure contains the same details as a Standard Disclosure but with the addition of any relevant and proportionate information held by the local police forces.

Standard and Enhanced Disclosure information can be extremely sensitive and personal, therefore any organisation that is in receipt of Disclosure information has to comply with a published Code of Practice to ensure information is handled fairly and used properly.

Cost of Criminal Records Checks

The CRB levies a charge for checks **on paid employees only**. Fees effective from April 2006 for paid employee:

- Standard Disclosure £31;
- Enhanced Disclosure £36.

Both standard and Enhanced Disclosures **are free for volunteers**.

How to obtain a criminal records check

At the request of the employer, the individual requiring the check makes an application, which has to be countersigned by a CRB registered body.

A voluntary organisation can apply to the CRB to become a registered body in order to access the Disclosure services for its own purposes. However, many organisations may consider this to be inappropriate for them or may be ineligible to become an RB, in which case they can use the services of a CRB Umbrella Registered Body

authorised to countersign applications on behalf of others.

Application process:

- Following a conditional offer of employment, a blank Disclosure application form is requested after the position has been assessed as being exempt from the provisions of the ROA and the level of check determined according to eligibility.
- The applicant completes and signs the application form giving consent for their details to be checked;
- Applicant ID is verified by the RB as employer or through arrangements made with an URB.
- The form is then countersigned by the employer if a CRB Registered Body in its own right or by an Umbrella Registered Body on behalf of the organisation requesting the check, and sent to CRB;
- CRB searches the various criminal record databases and compiles the criminal convictions certificate;
- The Disclosure (criminal convictions certificate) is sent to the applicant and also a copy to the countersignatory (employer as registered body or the umbrella registered body).
- In the case of an Enhanced Disclosure where additional information has been supplied by the local police force, such additional information is sent to the registered body only and under separate cover; the applicant does not receive a copy of this additional information.

The CRB website www.disclosure.gov.uk holds details of all Umbrella Registered Bodies. Wales Council for Voluntary Action Criminal Records Unit is listed on this website as an Umbrella Registered Body offering a free service for voluntary organisations in Wales.

WCVA Criminal Records Unit

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WCVA Criminal Records Unit (CRU) is a CRB Umbrella Registered body providing FREE access to the CRB Disclosure service for the Voluntary Sector within Wales.

The Unit has been set up to help with the safer recruitment of paid staff and volunteers who are recruited into positions working with children and vulnerable adults. CRU is able to provide blank Disclosure application forms and countersign applications on behalf of any voluntary organisation recruiting for positions based in Wales.

It also gives advice and guidance on the necessary procedures that need to be in place to ensure that organisations using criminal records checks are compliant with CRB Code of Practice

The fully bilingual service is FREE of administrative charge to voluntary organisations. The only charges are those levied by the CRB in relation to Disclosure checks for paid employees; volunteer checks are free of CRB charges.

WCVA CRU welcomes enquiries from organisations that would like to know more about criminal records checks or wishing to use the CRU service.

Further information

WCVA CRU

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Produced by WCVA, County Voluntary Councils and Volunteer Centres.

Last Updated: 23/04/2007